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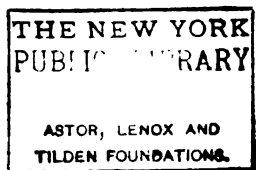
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IN HAUNTS OF WILD GAME

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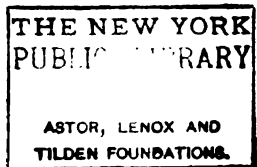




Illustration by J. H. P. H. H.

Illustration by J. H. P. H. H.

Sincerely Yours
Magacamba

IN HAUNTS OF WILD GAME

A HUNTER-NATURALIST'S WANDERINGS
FROM KALANGA TO LUBOMO

LEDEBURG VAN DER MEER
OF THE ROYAL NETHERLANDS
INDIAN ARCHÆOLOGICAL MISSION

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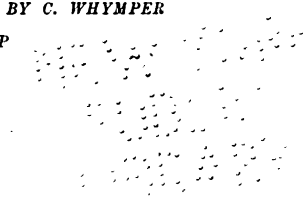
IN HAUNTS OF WILD GAME

A HUNTER-NATURALIST'S WANDERINGS
FROM KAHLAMBA TO LIBOMBO

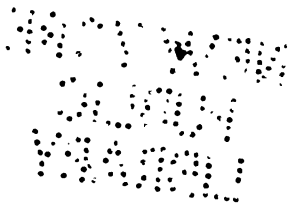
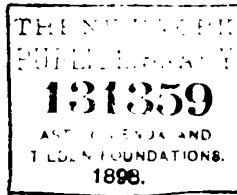
BY

FREDERICK VAUGHAN KIRBY, F.Z.S.
(MAQAQAMBA)

WITH A PORTRAIT OF THE AUTHOR
NUMEROUS ILLUSTRATIONS BY C. WHYMPER
AND A MAP



WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS
EDINBURGH AND LONDON
MDCCCXCVI



TO
THE MEMORY OF THE LATE
J. MORAY BROWN,
A KEEN SPORTSMAN, A GENIAL COMPANION,
AND A TRUE FRIEND,

This Work
IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED BY
THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE.

“WHAT! another book upon South African hunting. Who is it by?”

“Oh, no one you ever heard of: he is an old correspondent of ‘Land and Water,’ and used to write under a most unpronounceable pen-name—M-a-q-a-q-a-m-b-a, I think it is spelt!”

Just so; the writer is as unknown to, as his name is unpronounceable by, the many: and while he is desirous of preserving the *status quo* in the first instance, he would willingly assist in surmounting the difficulty presented in the latter, were it of any importance; but this, he begs to assure the reader, it is not,—he is altogether anxious to sink the personal in the descriptive. Whether, considering the constant recurrence of the egotistical first person singular—which, notwithstanding all his endeavours to eliminate it, still intrudes at every point, and must be looked upon as a necessary evil—he will be adjudged successful in his attempt, is another question. At least there is the satisfaction of knowing that the “I” only stands for an unknown quantity.

The writer can scarcely expect to do more than interest his brother-sportsmen; and if, reader, you come under that category, he may be pardoned for thinking—without being unduly confident—that a mutual understanding will quickly be established;

and if, moreover, you know and honestly appreciate the beauties of a good rifle, and the value of a good "shooting-horse," and can hold the one with unflinching steadiness, when an angry wounded lion is crouching within thirty paces, or a snarling leopard, himself unseen, threatens from a dark thorn-bush just under your nose; and can "saddle-up" the other, and stick to yon old sable antelope bull from start to finish through stony spruits and tangled bush,—then you can dispense with the formalities of a further introduction, fully assured that we shall ere long be boon companions.

It would be altogether too presumptuous on the writer's part to expect that others will care to follow him to the huntingveldt; yet even to them—an they be lovers of Nature, who can feel with the poet that

"There is a pleasure in the pathless woods,

There is society, where none intrudes,"—

he would say, "Come, and welcome; throw off for a while the trammels of conventionality and civilisation, and follow him over the rocky mist-enshrouded krantzies, through tree-embowered kloofs, darkly silent, and away down into the heart of the wild Low Country, there for a while to cast care to the winds along with the garb of nineteenth-century civilisation, the morning paper, unanswered letters, and the worries of mining shares, and to breathe the pure fresh air of the desert and taste of the inimitable joys, the unfettered freedom, of an African hunter's life!"

And last, but not least, a whisper in the ears of the fair sex! 'Twould be too great honour that these tales of wild sport should arouse even ordinary interest in your minds; yet perchance many of you have valued friends away by "Afric's sunny fountains," in Indian jungles, amongst America's rocky mountain-gorges, or midst Arctic snows, and to such, at any rate, this description of the vicissitudes of a hunter's life may possibly appeal; while to you who have no such absent ones, and whose interest in the

savage denizens of a still savage country is limited to the pleasure of a stroll through the Regent's Park Gardens on a sunny summer day, such description may yet serve to while away an idle hour by the fireside on a winter's evening.

And to you all I doff my *terai* in respectful salutation!

Much of the contents of this work has already seen the light in the columns of 'Land and Water,' to whose courteous editor the writer is indebted for the permission to reproduce.

In selecting these sketches, one object has been kept carefully in view,—to offer only such as are descriptive of the sport that one may reasonably expect to obtain at the present day in the Kahlamba-Libombo hunting-veldt, and within easy reach of a not too advanced civilisation.

Post-carts and coaches, and ere long the iron horse, will bring the intending sportsman to within sixty miles of the game-country; so that every facility is afforded him of carrying out all and any trophies he may secure.

The pages of the past the writer turns down with sincere regret, and with feelings akin to those which must have filled the breast of the "Indian hunter" when gazing on the ploughed lands and fenced enclosures which occupied the site of the old hunting-grounds of his forefathers. He would now deal only with the present, but in so doing urge that the fact be borne in mind that the hunting-country and its big game *have a past*—a past that can never be recalled. That fact alone will act as an inducement to sportsmen of the present day, in their own interests and that of science, to shoot fairly and with judgment and to be satisfied with enough.

Yet one more word. With the indiscriminate gunner,—the man who shoots with the one idea of topping the record, and who, considering any means are justifiable to that end, will race his horses till they cannot go another yard, in pursuit of giraffe, wildebeeste, or other game, firing and wounding without one thought beyond that of adding yet one more to the "list of big game shot"; who will knock over reedbuck with a smooth-bore, and sooner

than return empty-handed and without firing a shot, will deliberately bowl over ewes and cows,—with such the writer will surely fail to “hit it off,” for his ideas and theirs of what constitutes sport are widely divergent.

The sincere thanks of the Author are tendered to the artist, Mr Charles Whymper, whose studies of animal life which illustrate these pages are beyond all praise; also to Dr Sclater, Secretary of the Zoological Society of London, for the great assistance rendered in correcting various data connected with the more scientific portions of the work.

And, finally, he desires to express his gratitude to his publishers, Messrs William Blackwood & Sons, as much for their hearty encouragement as for the very excellent manner in which they have produced the work.

During the time which, owing to unforeseen delays, has elapsed since first I commenced to get my notes and memoranda together with a view to producing some of them in the present form, many changes have taken place.

In Mr Moray Brown, late sporting editor of ‘Land and Water,’ I have lost a true and valued friend, to whom, more than to any other, I owe the pleasure which, at different times and seasons, I have derived from collecting various matters of interest from my hunting diaries, for publication in the “Shooting” and “Natural History” columns of his paper. I saw him last in 1893, before I left England for Central Africa, and he was amongst the last of my friends to wish me heartily “*Bon voyage!*” and “*Au revoir!*”

Out in Africa some of the best and bravest companions I ever had in my wanderings have gone to the happy hunting-grounds. May and Stuurman, my two brave and devoted native hunters, whose names will more than once appear in this work, have fallen victims to fever and that terrible scourge smallpox, which raged with great virulence during my last expedition into the Nyasa country. Missing the house-boat by which I travelled, at Tshiromo, they had to follow me to Namalindi, on the Shiré, in

one of the African Lakes Company's boats, in which, according to irrefutable evidence, there was a native suffering from small-pox. This was the beginning of the end: all that could be done for them I did, but there were no manner of conveniences there for the treatment of this fell disease. When I left for the Inkombedzi district, neither of them was able to accompany me, and I had to place them in the care of the African Lakes Company's agent at Katungas, who had other patients on his hands. For a time my boys appeared to take a turn for the better, but shortly afterwards a relapse carried them off suddenly. So they and I will never meet again in life. They lie buried at Namalindi, on the banks of the Shiré, far from their native land, the rugged foothills of the Kahlamba in the Eastern Transvaal, and most sincerely do I mourn their loss. This is not to be wondered at, seeing that we have been hunting together for nine years. Both were strong, active fellows, and indomitably plucky; and they have helped me successfully through many a tight place. May was, without exception, the most resourceful and skilful hunter I have ever had, and was quite an authority upon the ways and means of lion- and leopard-hunting; and to his assistance I owe much of whatever success I have attained in their pursuit.

Moscow, whose name will also appear frequently, was perhaps the very best shooting-horse I have ever owned. A big, up-standing grey of 16 hands, thoroughly "salted," and though at least fifteen years old, he was fast, strong, and possessed of boundless energy and pluck. He knew his work thoroughly, and would face a growling lion at bay without flinching, and follow giraffe, sable antelope, or koodoo through the thickest bush. Let them twist and double as much as they liked, they would never shake Moscow off; all his rider had to do was to sit tight, watch the game, and use straight powder. He died at my place, in the Eastern Transvaal, on March 18, 1894, of gastro-enteritis, and I had not the means by me at the time wherewith to render him any assistance.

And yet another loss have I sustained, one which is absolutely irreparable, for by it I have been deprived of one of the noblest friends a man can have—a brave, faithful dog. My gallant Rover, my hero of many and many a hard-fought field, has succumbed to a peaceful old age, fourteen years and two months old at the time of his death in March last, 1895. How invaluable this faithful friend has been to me will be understood by any reader of these pages. For all these years he has followed his master's varying fortunes, ever the same, docile, brave, and loyal: sunshine or cloud, calm or storm, it made no manner of difference to him; and he was ever as ready for a brush with a lion or a buffalo as for a day's sport in the kloofs after bush-buck,—as keen for a chance to bring a snarling leopard to bay as to fight it out to the bitter end with a tough old bush-pig. His scars were numerous, but they were honourable: truly he was *sans peur et sans reproche*. I shall never think of him but the words of Whyte-Melville's well-known song, slightly paraphrased, will come back to me—

“There are those who hold that in a future state
Dumb creatures we have cherished here below
Shall give us joyous meeting when we pass the golden gate :
Is it folly that I hope it may be so ?
For never man had friend, more enduring to the end,
Truer mate in every turn of time and tide:
Could I think we'd meet again, it would lighten half my pain
At the place where my gallant Rover died !”

THE AUTHOR.

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"Rover."

IN HAUNTS OF WILD GAME.

INTRODUCTORY.

The Kahlamba range—High veldt—The Libombo—Area—The terrace-lands—Scenery—Gorgeous colouring—The mountain roads—Highroads—Suggestive names—The foothills—Flora—The Low Country—Vegetation—The thorns—Great apparent sameness—Nature, the great teacher—Fever and malaria—Nature's voice—Disappearance of the game—In days gone by—Distribution of the game—Elephants—"Insapan!"

BEFORE starting together for the hunting - veldt, let us glance awhile at the principal features of the country, in order to arrive at a better understanding of the surroundings of the *feræ naturæ* which we purpose, later on, to follow into their various haunts.

The district to which I wish to call attention lies on the eastward and seaward side of the Kahlamba or Drakensberg range,—a continuous chain of mountains running north and south through the country, with a total length of very nearly 400 miles, and varying in breadth from thirty to seventy miles. On the north side of the Oliphants river it is merged into and assumes the name of the Zoutpansberg range, becoming much depressed, broken, and irregular towards its northern end, round which flows the queen of South African rivers, the beautiful Limpopo, on its eastward course towards the Indian Ocean. The range varies in height from about 3000 feet to that of the Mauch-berg, 8725 feet, and forms the great natural buttress of the Hoog-veldt, or High Country, on its western side, which has an elevation of from 4000 to 7000 feet above sea-level. Its eastern slope is very bold and rugged, and from its highest peaks descends by a series of terraces or plateaux—ranging from 5000 to 7000 feet in height—to the foothills, with an average elevation of from 2000 to 3000 feet. The range is distant from the coast about 160 miles, though in places—notably from the inside curve of Delagoa Bay—it is not more than 120 miles. The smaller range of the Libombo intervenes, running north and south from the Limpopo river—which it just touches—to the Pongola river. This range has an average height of 1250 feet, its highest peak being 2120 feet above sea-level; and its average distance from the Kahlamba range is about eighty miles.

To speak roughly, the Kahlamba-Libombo hunting-veldt—the district I am about to describe, and in which, with but one or two exceptions where reference to other parts in which I have hunted has to some extent been necessary, all the scenes and incidents herein depicted have occurred—lies between the Oliphants river on the north, the Sabi on the south, and the Libombo and Kahlamba ranges respectively on the east and west; in other words, between 24° and 25° S. latitude and 30° and 32° E. longitude, embracing an area of about 7000 square miles. The terrace country lying between the main range of the Kahlamba and its foothills is very open, and in combination with the rough and broken country below it, presents to the eye some of the grandest scenery in South Africa. The highest terraces consist of fine, open grass-land, varied here and there—

and particularly on the sides of the rolling ridges, and in the warm sheltered hollows—by long stretches of low bush, amongst which the *rhenoster-bosch* (a rough brittle-stemmed bush which when burned makes excellent charcoal) and the *zwerker-bosch* (sugar-bush, *Protea mellifera*) of the Boers are of most frequent occurrence: the latter produces large numbers of white waxen flowers, not unlike rhododendron, in whose cells great quantities of honey are stored (hence the name “sugar-bush”), which attract countless myriads of bees, and many beautiful sunbirds. In many of the great kloofs (long, deep hollows worn by mountain streams and torrents, and more or less heavily timbered;—ravines) which intersect these terraces good timber is plentiful, the principal tree being the *geelhout-boom* (yellow-wood tree) of the Boers and *'mkoba* of the natives. These kloofs during the summer-time present glowing contrasts of colour, of a gorgeous richness which would surprise any one seeing them for the first time. From out the shimmering green of their rustling depths, whence come

“The moan of doves
And murmuring of innumerable bees,”

bright points of colour flash from the many brilliant flowering trees and shrubs, whose foliage forms a fresco of glowing light and shade in the background. The “bean-tree” with its beautiful lilac blossoms, the twining *'mfomfi* laden with its luscious yellow fruit, wild jasmine, wild orange—of overpoweringly delicious perfume—the glaring “flamboyant,” and the glorious “Kafir-boom,” vie with each other in producing richest effects, and glow with the colours of the rainbow that after the day’s thunder-storm spans the arch above them.

The roads over the mountain are nowhere good, and usually very bad—those leading off from the great eastern plateau being especially aggravating. Of course all are very unlike English highroads: the term “high” is only applicable to them in regard either to their elevation, which is considerable, or to their odour at such times as the luckless span of “fly-stuck” oxen from the Low Country—urged to their best pace while yet they can keep their legs, in order to get them to a butcher’s shop to be killed for “Kafir-meat” before they die of the poison—falls

down one after another from utter exhaustion, to die miserably on the roadside.

I venture to say that sportsmen coming from England and various parts of South Africa, who have had to get their waggons with their costly freights over these roads, will never forget them: their "stickfasts" and capsizees will certainly be remembered amongst the most vivid experiences of the year's shooting-trip! "Hell's Gates," "The Shoot," "The Devil's Pass," and "The Devil's Knuckles" are some of the suggestive names whereby portions of these roads are connected with his Satanic majesty in the minds of those who toil over them; and they speak for themselves.

All this country is magnificently watered. Everywhere

"The bald and rocky shoulders of the mountains
Give birth to full and swiftly flowing streams."

Every kloof, every little grassy hollow, echoes the laugh and song of dancing, sparkling rivulets, which day and night, winter and summer, rain and shine, glide and rush and leap along over their rough stony beds.

Lower down, the ridges assume a more rolling appearance, and are more thickly wooded; though the numerous kloofs seem to lose their larger trees, and give shelter to lower and more scrubby bush. Reed-margined streams, horribly treacherous in places, divide these ridges; and the "sour" grass of the terrace-lands gives place to sweet nutritious veldt, splendid grazing for cattle throughout the cold winter months.

The rugged spurs leading off from the terrace-lands form, as it were, the dividing line between them and the flats below; and upon them may be found specimens of the flora of each zone. The lofty *'mhlumi*, with its tough durable wood and long assegai-shaped leaves, and the red-pear, grow side by side with the "yellow-wood" and "assegai-wood" trees; the *'mnombela*, laden with delicious, astringent, crimson plums, rears its head, with crown of dark-green glossy leaves, by the side of the spreading fig-tree and the glorious flowering "Kafir-boom"; the *'mbuli* and *water-hout-boom* chum together; whilst amongst edible fruit-bearing shrubs and bushes are the *'mfomfi*, *'nhlangotshana*, and *'mantunduluku*. I must crave pardon for inflicting

these unattractive-looking names upon the reader, for the fact is my knowledge of these trees and shrubs is limited to the flavour of their fruit, the quality of their wood, and their native and, in some cases, Boer names. Here and there stunted acaciæ—usually *Acacia horrida*—encroach upon this higher ground; but nowhere do they approach to the size attained by them in the Low Country. Still we travel eastward, ever descending lower and lower, till we at last reach the Low Country proper. Water in the winter or dry season is scarce, owing to the usually sandy nature of the soil, only appearing in “holes” in the rocky bars which intersect their sandy river-beds; and long, sweet “buffalo-grass” fringes the banks of the rivers. Close up under the foot-hills a pretty bush, bearing delicate white flowers, and in its season a small sweet plum, known to the natives as *’matungulu*, is very plentiful, as also the *’mngcosi* and *’mbuli*, the sickly fruit of the latter being an especial favourite with wild-pigs; and on the flats we meet everywhere with the ubiquitous *’mganu*—the *’mrula* of the Basutos—a pleasing acid fruit, from which the natives make a very intoxicating beverage. The *’masala*, called locally custard-apples, and a closely allied species, *’mkwakwa*, are everywhere plentiful, and complete the list of the edible fruit-bearing trees. This is the country, *par excellence*, of the acaciæ, of which there are five varieties, the other principal trees being *’mbondsa*, *’mtshisimpisi*, *’msipani*, and “impala-bush.” Ferns of great size are abundant, as also cacti, euphorbiæ, fan-palms, and palmite: but there, I am no botanist, unfortunately, so I shall only say that tropical and subtropical vegetation flourishes like a green bay-tree! But it does not require any great botanical knowledge to assure one of the existence of thorns; a very slight acquaintance with the Low Country will prove productive of much knowledge. If there is no rose without its thorn, there are at any rate many thorns without their roses, for roses there are none, though every bush, shrub, and tree is armed with hook, claw, spike, grapple, or bayonet; the very grass-edges cut like razors, whilst their long pendulous stalks hurl showers of insidious little spear-points upon the passer-by with an accuracy of aim worthy of the Wambutti bowman, and cause endless worry and annoyance if they drop down one’s neck or between shirt and trouser-band!

It is a beautiful country though, after all, especially in the winter, when the days are clear, dry, and warm, and the nights cool and bracing—too cool and bracing, the lost one is apt to think, if he has to spend the “witching hours” hungry, coatless, vestless, possibly fireless, and probably companionless!

At first sight there appears very much sameness in everything: the trees seem all about of equal height, the general impression given by a view over the country from the top of any solitary kopje or unusually high tree being that of bewildering vagueness, a leafy sea of almost unruffled smoothness; the creeks differ but little one from the other; hills, as they are generally understood, there are none; here and there low kopjes will be found, raising their bush-crowned heads above the flats, silent tireless guardians of the jungle around their bases. And yet, after all, that fancied sameness does not exist, or exists only in a very small degree. As one gets more accustomed to the bush, more in touch with wild nature, so the thoughts will expand, the powers of observation will become developed, the minutest objects that erstwhile would have been passed by unnoticed will now arrest the attention, and claim their places as items in one harmonious whole. Nature reveals herself to those who love her, but why should she do so to those who love her not? Her face she cannot hide—that must for ever wear its charm; but her heart, with its boundless wealth of beauty and store of learning, she reveals only to those who seek her in love, and who strive to understand her. Just so is it with a child and a book. Untaught, he looks upon it as all the same—black and white—very pretty perhaps as to its binding, and with beautiful colours blended in its pictures, but it reveals nothing to him. Arouse his interest, teach him to read and understand it, and lo! unheard-of, unthought-of beauties pass in review before him; sameness gives place to variety, the Unknown to the Known. And so with the great book of Nature. To her untaught children it ever appears beautiful—its cover, its exterior, ever charms the eye; but its hidden wonders, its hidden beauties, they know not: a caterpillar is a caterpillar, an acorn an acorn, and a volcano a volcano; but why and how these things exist, what part each plays in the great drama of Nature—*how can they know it?* But those who seek knowledge, who desire a

further insight into her mysteries, she is ever ready to assist; the very charm of her outward beauty courts deeper admiration and invites inquiry. With her we sail her oceans, we climb her mountains, we cross her rivers, we tread her forests, and at every step we learn and love more, for the Unknown has become Known, and the Dark, Light. Turn we now back particularly to that page of the book which demands our special attention.

Rich in vegetation of bewildering variety, and teeming with animal life as it unquestionably is, yet the serpent is hidden amongst its blossoms; for its reed-margined rivers—flowing through dense groves of impala-bush, and whose still pools are white and purple with water-lilies, and scattered over with the golden drops of the acacia blossoms—its flower-studded dells, its grassy ridges, all those spots which are most charming to the eye,—

“Where the tints of the earth and the hues of the sky,
In colour though varied, in beauty may vie,”—

over each and all of these the deadly malarial fever in its worst form casts its devastating arms, many in number as those of the fabled Briareus. Yet still we who are sportsmen love it with all its faults, for is it not the home of the big game? As we cross its sandy ridges and walk along the bush-fringed crocodile-haunted river-banks, we are listening to Nature speaking to us; every sign we see is, as it were, her voice helping and instructing us. The bark-stripped trees, the muddy pathway through broken reeds and river-borne *débris*, the down-trodden grass, the drag along yon dry river-bed, the blood-stained herbage, and the myriads of buzzing flies, tell their own tale; the spoor of the startled sable antelope in the soft sandy soil, flying from that dark, tangled, and evil-smelling thicket on the other side; the signs of struggle upon the edge of the deep, dark pool; the cropped shoots of the “wait-a-bit” thorns, and sprays of the table-topped acaciæ,—these are all voices of Nature; words, pages, and chapters of her book, keenly studied and devoured by her devotees.

The game of the country of which I write is still varied and fairly numerous, though of late years the destruction of the South African fauna has been very great; and we who have

known the country in its earlier days can but look back with feelings of deep regret for what has been, and forward with concern to what may be. It must be borne in mind that many of the animals now to be found only in the "fly"-infested tracts of the bush-veldt along the course of the Sabi, Oliphants, Limpopo, and Singwetsi rivers at one time, well within my own recollection, existed in large numbers in the more broken country amongst the foothills of the mountain-range; amongst those which have thus retreated to safer haunts being buffalo, rhinoceros, giraffe, eland, and roan antelope. I can well remember hunting the black rhinoceros in places where now one might walk or ride for hours without turning out so much as a reedbuck. There are still a fair number of koodoo, waterbuck, wildebeeste, Burchell's zebra, and a few sable antelope to be found more or less near to the skirts of civilisation, wherever certain natural advantages have proved favourable to their remaining; but they are appreciably diminishing in numbers every year. Nowadays the highest plateaux of the range (the krantz country) afford shelter to many of the smaller antelopes; reedbuck, oribi, and duiker on the open flats and ridges; mountain reedbuck and vaal rhé buck on the hills and krantzes; bushbuck, 'msumbi (the red or bush duiker), and bush-pigs in the kloofs and small patches of bush; leopards and cheeta still lurk about the kloofs and krantzes; and the "aard-wolf," African foxes, and ant-bear are numerous.

Amongst the foothills (the kloof country) we leave behind us the mountain reedbuck; the oribi and vaal rhé buck are met with sparingly on the stretches of open grass-land; but here is the true home of the hill leopard, while cheeta are plentiful, and the great spotted hyæna not unfrequently met with. Hunting-dogs and serval are common; the civet and ratel, though numerous, are seldom seen; koodoo in the hills, buffalo in the dense kloofs, and bush-pig everywhere; while all the smaller antelopes, with the exception of those mentioned as peculiar to the terrace-lands, are very numerous. Bushbuck and 'msumbi especially, swarm in all the dense heavily-wooded kloofs; and klipspringers in the krantzes and kopjes.

Then as we proceed farther east we find the long, gaunt, pale-coloured leopard of the Low Country proper, with many inter-

mediate forms; all the smaller antelopes are still met with in numbers, with the exception of the 'msumbi, which is very rare, being only seen in the densely-wooded tracts close to water. Eland, sable antelope, roan antelope, koodoo, waterbuck, sassaby, blue wildebeeste, impala, reedbuck, duiker, steinbuck, and rarely the gryx-steinbuck, are the antelopes of the Low Country.

Eland and roan antelope are very scarce indeed, a small tract of country between the Oliphants and Limpopo rivers being about the only place where small troops can be still found.

As lately as five years ago there were elephants on the Timbati, a herd of over fifty head being encountered by some Boer hunters: they come from the extensive reed-beds at the junction of the Letaba and Oliphants rivers, though they still exist in the dense bush on the Libombo slopes.

Both species of rhinoceros are now practically extinct, the square-mouthed being altogether so,¹ though a few of the prehensile-lipped species remain in the Libombo and the Matamiri bush on the lower Sabi.

Buffalo and hippopotami are to be found; giraffe, ostrich, and Burchell's zebra still plentiful; lions everywhere along the courses of the principal rivers, also grey and red foxes and black-backed jackals, spotted hyæna, and cheeta; the bush-pig is very rare in the Low Country, but the wart-hog supplies its place, and is most plentiful; serval, and two smaller species of the Felidæ—the *impaka* and *imbodhla* of the natives—are found. The latter cat bears much resemblance to the impaka, but is longer in body and shorter in tail, and with fewer brindlings upon a slightly warmer ground colour.

The disappearance of the game is not solely attributable to its extermination by the rifle; the advance of civilisation has driven it back, and caused it to retire from those parts where it was constantly hunted on horseback, and take refuge in the "fly"-infested districts, where horses and other domestic animals cannot live. In these secure retreats it is seldom molested: the "fly" has

¹ For many years past the well-known Matamiri bush, lying along the south bank of the Sabi river, has been a favourite resort of *Rhinoceros simus*, but they have become almost extinct now even there. This year (1895) I came upon two in that district, a cow and big calf; but they are decidedly rare. The Matamiri bush, however, does not come within the district which I seek to describe, though separated from its southern boundary only by the Sabi river.

done more for the preservation of the game than all the game-laws ever framed. Fever, in its worst form, is rife throughout the summer months, and is another and almost equally important factor in the preservation of the big game from utter annihilation.

Such is the country at the present day; and though it will be seen that it is all old ground over which we propose to travel, yet even old ground may come to possess new interest according as it is viewed by different eyes and judged by different standards, for of the hunting country it may truly be said, "*semper aliquid novi*."

It has seemed advisable, for several reasons, in the present work, to separate the series,—bringing together, in the first part, those chapters descriptive of the pursuit of game amongst the broken foothills of the mountain-ranges, the country of *krantz* and *kloof*; and combining in the second portion of the work those which deal more immediately with the larger fauna of the "*bush-veldt*," "*hunting-veldt*," or *Low Country*, as it is variously termed.

It is perhaps needless to remark that no such arbitrary division actually exists, as the foregoing brief description of the country and its fauna will sufficiently show; most of the smaller antelopes, the *koodoo* amongst the larger, and the leopard and buffalo, being common to both portions of the district.

Having now obtained a fair idea of what the country is like through which we intend to hunt, we will get the oxen up, *inspan*, and *trek*.

PART I.

KRANTZ AND KLOOF

CHAPTER I.

REEDBUCK AND SMALL-GAME SHOOTING.

Political differences—My native hosts—Reminiscences of sport—Rough country—Abundance of small game—Choice of shooting-grounds—The dance interrupted—'Mqedsa confident—'Msumbi—Reedbuck afoot—A pretty sight—A fine ram down—A lucky shot—A good beginning—Rover and 'Mahlatshwa—To the krantz for klipspringers—The Martial hawk-eagle—Fatal hesitation—Two klipspringers with one bullet—Regulating the penetration of hollow Express bullets—Curious incidents of sport—A reedbuck and duiker with one bullet—At once a miss and a hit—Fur and feather—'Mgiyo's vlei—A fabled ram—My larder runs low—Duike ewe with horns—'Manombela—Better than nothing—Good luck for an "off-day"—Anxious watching—Stalking—Only just in time—The ram bagged—Tenacity of life—The old vlei again—Bushbuck started—Wound a pig—Bayed by the dogs—Ground-pigs—Mysterious disappearance—A tough buck—'Mfazi—A stern chase—At fault—Come up with our game—Result of the first two shots.

SOME years ago (1884) I had taken up my quarters at the kraal of a well-known Swazi *induna*, who, having fallen into disgrace over some political questions with the then reigning king of Swaziland, 'Mbandini, since dead, had retired into Transvaal territory, and occupied a location near the border. The *induna* was surrounded by such of his people as were actuated by feelings of loyalty towards their chieftain, and by others who, though on the best of terms with him, would have preferred to return to their own country, if only on account of their dislike to the present rulers of the Transvaal, but for the wholesome dread they entertained of their king's certain anger, and their own equally certain subsequent punishment. Amongst these good people I was for long an honoured guest, and assuredly I shall

never forget the sincere though unpretentious nature of the welcome accorded to me, nor the simple life passed in their midst, with its varying excitements and occasional touches of savagery. Day after day, accompanied by one or more of these ardent sportsmen, I scaled the rocky krantz, or penetrated the dark wooded kloofs in search of the many varieties of smaller game which then existed in that district in large numbers. We were indefatigable in our exertions, and ere long there was no ridge, valley, krantz, or kloof but had echoed to the report of my rifle, the glad shouts of my companions, and the merry music of my dogs. And oh, the charms of such a wild free life! when every pulse throbs exultantly with health and strength, when the eye is keen and the heart light, when every evening brings welcome and well-earned repose, and returning day renews desire for action!

The district to which I refer was very specially adapted to the existence of small game of all kinds, the country being very broken, consisting principally of densely wooded kloofs, backed by precipitous krantzes, and with open ridges of grassland between them. The streams which ran through most of these kloofs were in many cases of considerable size, and frequently the body of water contained in them increased so much during the heavy rains of the wet season—November to March—that the banks became entirely denuded of soil, leaving only great masses of boulders piled up on either hand. Then, as the water retired during the dry season, extensive alluvial flats were thus formed, where the torrents descended less rapidly, and upon which long rank grass quickly sprang up, very soon followed by a growth of almost impenetrable bush and scrub. At the time of which I write, the plateaux above the krantzes were alive with reedbuck, oribi, duiker, and rhé buck; whilst great maned baboons, agile klipspringers, and small rodents innumerable could be found along the krantzes themselves.

In the kloofs leopards, bushbuck, 'msumbi, and bush-pig were very numerous, whilst upon the flats below, oribi could be frequently found, though scarcer here than on the higher plateaux, and reedbuck, duiker, and pigs abounded. Slightly lower down towards the Sabi river there was always the off-chance of a shot at cheeta and koodoo, and now and then waterbuck, so that I

had ample choice of game and of shooting-grounds. One day I would ride out, passing the 'Mshatsa kraal, and, descending the hills to the flats, pass the time till evening along the banks of one or other of the many streams which intersected the country, and round about the deserted mealie-gardens in search of reed-buck or duiker; another would see my little party, all on foot, climbing the hills and scaling the krantzes, returning home at night with a couple of oribi or klipspringers, and perhaps a luckless hare or two which had fallen victims to the boys' knobkerries, or to one of the tired pack jogging along behind us. With next day's sunrise we would be well on our way to the great Leopards' Kloof, in and around which bush-buck and 'msumbi abounded, and where many a grand old black ram has rewarded us for precious hours of real hard work. And how often, seated in the kraal at night, under the crescent moon and the brilliant star-studded sky, whilst troops of merry laughing girls danced and sang around the cattle-kraal enclosure in all the exuberance of young life and careless joy, have I heard the song stopped, and the dancing, never-tired feet arrested, by the words "Bindsa-ni, ani vwi na? Nans' ingwe!" ("Be quiet you, don't you hear? There's a leopard!") And then, as all turn silently towards the dark kloof, from out its depths would come the grating cry, the hoarse sullen "goom! goom!" of the great cat going its nightly rounds; till again, after a listening interval, song and dance are resumed, and I would stoop down to caress my favourite hound, and promise him that to which I looked forward myself—grand sport on the morrow. And thus the time passed, and the ties formed in those days are still unbroken. The dusky little athletes that accompanied me on my excursions—each with a rough light assegai and rudely-fashioned knobkerrie, and proud beyond measure to be the one selected now and then to carry my rifle—have grown up to be fine strapping young fellows, proud of their master's successes, and keen as ever to follow him into the hunting-veldt.

"Well, 'Mqedsa, what chance of game to-morrow?" I asked a young lad the evening prior to one of my "good" days. "Ang' ati, baas; 'ma si na 'madhloti siyau ti tola, kambe" ("I don't know, sir; if we are lucky"—literally, "have the good spirits with us"—"we shall probably find them"), he cautiously

answered, though he certainly seemed either confident or careless of the assistance of these "good spirits."

At dawn we were astir, and whilst I was sipping the ever-welcome cup of "morning coffee" (to which African colonists become such slaves) my boys busied themselves getting everything ready for the day's sport. Sunrise saw us crossing the stream below the kraal, whence we made our way as quickly as possible to the high ridge above 'Mgiyo's vlei. On the way I had a shot at an 'msumbi, but missed him. Comical little fellows these 'msumbi are, and always very plentiful in the districts which they frequent. They are of most retiring habits, keeping almost exclusively to the thickest kloofs, which they only leave in the evenings and early mornings. The probable reason of this is that they are not grass-feeders to any extent, their food consisting almost entirely of the aromatic leaves and young tender shoots of trees and shrubs which they can obtain in the kloofs. Their tastes in this direction are even more pronounced than those of the bushbuck. During the summer months when the wild fruit is ripe, they confine themselves almost entirely to this diet, the '*timbuli* and '*manombela* (the *stam-vrucht* of the Boers) being their especial favourites. I have often been much amused by watching one of these little fellows with one of the *imbuli* plums in his mouth, twisting and turning it around, and making all sorts of wry faces in his endeavours to manipulate the luscious *mouthful* successfully. They are very easily shot when found out of the bush, provided one is quick, but directly they suspect danger they dive back into the bush with marvellous celerity. In the open any decent dog can run into them at once, as they have no turn of speed, but they can seldom be driven into the open during the day; in the dense thorn thickets they will keep a good half-dozen dogs, keen as they may be, racing about from point to point for hours, before they will break cover. Their dark red-brown hide makes them very conspicuous objects in the sunlight, but almost invisible in shade. Their height at the shoulder is 20 inches, and half an inch more at the croup. Both sexes carry horns, which are almost hidden in the tuft of hair round their bases. The skin partakes much of the nature of the bushbuck's, and is very tough and durable. But to resume.

Half an hour later we reached the edge of the large vlei or valley above mentioned, and instructing the boys to cross over and beat down through the cover on the opposite bank, I kept one of their number with me to work the dogs on my side. Not more than 100 yards down stream a reedbuck got out of some ferns in front of the party on the other side, and crossing through on to



"Pulling in quickly, I was on the ground before the last got up."

mine, cantered off down the vlei, keeping a little away from the bank, where the cover was very long. I caught sight of him running along the edge of a considerable depression in the ground, and some 300 yards distant. The whole area of this hollow was covered with long fine thatch-grass, and free from holes; so giving my nag his head, I galloped as hard as I knew how across the hollow, in order to get a good shot at the buck as

he went out of the rising ground beyond. I had almost reached the far edge, and was about to pull in, when with a rush and a scramble, out of some long bracken to my right, up jumped three more reedbuck, ewes, and went off like lightning—and a reedbuck *can* travel when he makes up his mind to it! A fourth, a young ram, sprang up immediately after them, followed by three other beauties on my left, there having been no less than seven lying in this favoured spot. They made a brave display of snow-white tails as they went away out of the hollow, but I did not stop to admire. Pulling in quickly, I was on the ground before the last got up, and noting a remarkably fine ram amongst them, fired at him, and had the satisfaction of seeing him stumble forward, recover himself falteringly, and drop down just on the higher ground in front of me. I got in a second shot at a big ewe as she ran down the bank to cross through the vlei, and evidently hit her.

Jumping on my horse again, I got out of the hollow, and galloped down to the spot where the ewe had disappeared, when I saw two reedbuck standing on the slope of the hill, 220 yards distant across the vlei. Fortunately my dogs were by this time well scattered, some being with the dead ram, and others still after the first reedbuck that got up; and the boys having dropped low in the grass on seeing the buck cross, these latter were not seriously alarmed, and soon came to a stand. I took a steady kneeling shot at the nearest of the two, and dropped him on the spot—a decidedly creditable performance. Two more shots fired at the other as he topped the ridge, missed, and I at once rode back to where lay the ram first shot. He had got the bullet in at the small ribs, raking him through to the opposite shoulder, which was smashed. Neither 'Mqedsa nor I knew where the wounded ewe had gone off to, and we could get no information from the party across the vlei, as they had been too intent upon marking down the two which crossed through to them, and had not seen her after she entered the reeds. We got the dogs on, but they only took the spoor down to the water, and as there was no blood we had to give it up. Fortunately the one I had dropped on the other side turned out to be a ram with 11½-inch horns, the larger one carrying a splendid pair, prettily curved, 14 inches in length. Whilst we covered these two with

grass to hide them from the keen eyes of the vultures, I sent a boy across the mealie-grounds to tell some of the occupants of the nearest kraal to come and take the big ram home, keeping the smaller one for themselves. We then struck off down stream again as before, and in the direction probably taken by the ewe, which I felt sure was hard hit. A duiker got up on my side, but did not offer a shot, but shortly after another ran out from the boys, going straight on top of the dogs: they headed it, and turned it back to the boys, who greeted it with a shower of light assegais as it flew past in the grass, while I also had a shot at it. This shot and the next missed, but only by a very little; a third—fired just as the dogs tailed out of the long grass and commenced to ascend the slope, close on the buck's heels—caught him in the back of the neck and stretched him out. Here was really a good beginning, as it was yet quite early, and we had two fine ram reedbuck down, and a duiker. We continued thoroughly hunting the banks of this stream as far as the spot where, through a cool leafy screen of *'manombela* and *'mfomfi* bushes, it leapt over a small fall in a cloud of glittering spray. We crossed through to join the boys on the opposite side, and set to work on the high ridges bordering the stream, and along which some of the reedbuck had probably run, purposing to hunt it back, and recross at the spot where we had commenced operations that morning. In one or other of the small hollows in which grass and low bracken grew luxuriantly, I felt confident we should come across the wounded ewe, lying up, and, as a matter of fact, the very first we entered held our game. Poor brute, she had felt her strength diminishing, and had chosen this cover as the very last she would ever require. I was riding nearest the stream, and the boys walking in line higher up the slope, when I noticed two or three of the dogs turn off towards a small thick patch of ferns, and stand sniffing on the leaves and grass around the edge. I had scarcely checked my horse, when with a rush the ewe burst out, and with outspread tail bounded away down the hill, her feet seeming scarcely to touch the ground. A quick run forward and two of the boys got near enough to throw their assegais; but they were completely out of it, the light-shafted weapons burying themselves in the ground, yards behind the flying buck, where they hung quivering. I was off my horse,

and waiting with cocked rifle, as it seemed the buck would probably pass me at less than fifty yards; but Rover and 'Mahlatshwa were before me, and, darting out of the ferns, caused the buck to swerve slightly, and next moment both dogs were struggling neck and neck for the first grip. Just as I jumped into the saddle, and gathered the reins together in my hand, I saw Rover lay hold of the near flank: they struggled on a few yards, then a sounding kick rolled the dog over and over, with half the breath knocked out of his body. But 'Mahlatshwa now cut in, and seizing the hind-leg of the buck, very neatly threw her over on to her back; Rover to the rescue,—a scuffle and worry, the excited Kafirs rush up, and their keen assegais terminate the unequal struggle. This was the identical buck I had wounded in the morning: my bullet had passed clean through her ribs, too far back to prove quickly fatal. It is a very unusual thing to find as many as seven reedbuck lying together within so small an area; indeed I have never seen it before nor since. Three or four will sometimes get up from a favourable spot, but as a rule they keep in pairs, except when the ewes are in young, when the rams lie about alone. On one occasion I recollect seeing thirteen reedbuck together, but they were feeding on a small patch of young grass, and when alarmed ran off in different directions.

I decided to send my horse back from this spot, where the ewe fell; so we lashed the dead buck over the saddle, after giving the dogs their perquisites, and sent two boys back home with the horse. It was by this time high noon, and uncommonly hot down in the confined valley; but after a brief rest we moved off again, striking across the vlei for the edge of the krantz, which rose from beyond the low ground over which we had hunted in the morning. On reaching the krantz we managed to scramble up a narrow pass, and gained the top, from which we had a good view of the surrounding country.

The krantz itself consisted of an irregular and extensive wall of rock, moss-covered and water-worn, and riven asunder in many places. The deep narrow chasms thus formed contained a shallow alluvial deposit, and had become filled with hardy trees and shrubs, which grew strugglingly from amongst the great rough masses of stone which were strewn along the bottom, having become detached from the hanging krantz-wall above. This place I knew

to be an almost certain find for klipspringers, these rock-loving creatures delighting in high stony kopjes and krantzies, in the near neighbourhood of clumps of bush, in which they love to seek shelter during the heat of the day. But on this occasion we travelled some distance along the edge of the escarpment before finding a single klipspringer to reward our labours, being delayed some time by a hare which the boys put up, and, when it bolted into a hole in the rocks, persistently ferreted out and killed. Turning an angle of rock, and while standing on a particularly slippery spot, a sharp whistle in front of me apprised me that game was afoot, and running forward at the imminent risk of "coming a cropper," I saw a klipspringer scuttling along the edge of the krantz, about 100 yards in front of me. Before I could "lay on" him, however, he jumped down into a ravine, in which he was hidden from view. Thinking I might possibly get a glimpse of him either in the scrub below or on one of the great rocky buttresses which occurred at intervals along the base of the krantz, I sat down and cautiously slid over the rounded face of the rock, watching very carefully to catch a narrow ledge of rock below, otherwise I might have launched off into space, and not stopped till I reached the foot of the krantz. This ledge reached, I found that it afforded me at best but an insecure foothold, but I had other matters to attend to. A movement and slight sound farther along the edge of the krantz attracted my attention, and glancing quickly round, I saw a great 'usoti (Martial hawk-eagle, *Spizdiëtus bellicosus*) just gliding from his perch on the topmost limb of an old, dry, lightning-blasted tree, on which he had probably sat motionless for hours, scanning the country which lay mapped out beneath him, with piercing eyes. I wonder if he had seen the small yellowish object lying against the face of the rock, behind a piece of scanty bush near the foot of the tree upon which he had been perched! It caught my eye at once, as I withdrew my gaze from the withered tree and its late occupant, now sailing on broad, powerful pinions through the clear, warm air. At first I was uncertain as to its nature, but on looking very carefully, made it out to be another klipspringer, crouching very low down on the rock, its head slightly raised, and eyeing me attentively. I was in a very awkward position for a shot, and turned slightly to try and better it; but the

buck seemed to be aware that it was discovered, and sprang to its feet with a shrill whistle, then with one light bound was 10 feet up the face of the slippery rock. Catching sight of the Kafirs on top, who were crouching down holding on to the too-eager dogs, it hesitated an instant—and was lost. A sharp report rang out from the narrow ledge, and springing wildly into the air, the poor little unfortunate fell down, down, turning over and over, till it struck with a dull thud the edge of one of the rocky buttresses, which was splashed with its blood, and rebounding thence, crashed down through the trees and brushwood on to the ground below. It took us half an hour to get down that krantz again to where the buck had fallen, and as it was then getting on in the afternoon, we decided not to go any farther, and after cleaning the buck, set off towards the kraal again, after a thoroughly successful day's sport.

One afternoon about a week afterwards I was hunting along that same krantz. I had two dogs with me, which had run off on the spoor of something, and were hunting along the top, while I continued my course along a fairly wide irregular ledge, some 50 feet from the ground below. I was just approaching one of the many tree-embowered chasms which break the otherwise monotonous line of krantz, and had stopped for an instant debating in my own mind how best to pass the barrier, when I heard the dogs give tongue above me, and next moment two klipspringers came jumping lightly down the krantz, and evidently making for the bushy ravine which barred my progress. When I first saw them the one was running behind the other, but as they crossed over the face of a great flat sloping rock they ran side by side at less than 80 yards from where I stood. It was a very easy shot, as they were going steadily, and as I fired at the one nearest to me it fell and rolled down off the sloping rock into the ravine. I could not see the other for the smoke, so on reaching the spot I clambered with difficulty down the slippery rocks, on which I found blood-spoor, calling my dogs on as I went along. Before they came up, however, I walked suddenly on top of the wounded animal, which stood looking at me only a few paces distant. I fired so hurriedly that I made an execrable shot, missing her clean. She only ran a little way, however, when I dropped her with another bullet. Still not

seeing my dogs anywhere, I climbed back out of the ravine with the dead ewe, intending to whistle them up, but almost immediately heard the piercing cry of a wounded buck a long way down in the ravine below. I hurried to the spot, and found my dogs standing beside the other klipspringer, a very fine ram, which lay dead. On examining it, to my surprise I found a bullet-wound in the fore-shoulder, which was smashed. The bullet with which I had first dropped the ewe had passed clean through her, and broken the shoulder of the ram as he ran beside and slightly above her. This incident well supports the argument in favour of a modified form of Express rifle. I was using a .500 single rifle by Westley-Richards, with 100 grains No. 6, C. & H., and a hollow-pointed bullet of 540 grains. The hollow, however, was very small indeed, so that the bullet expanded but slightly, and therefore retained almost all the penetrating powers of a solid projectile. From this it can be easily seen that the necessary penetration can be regulated at will by the size of the hollow in the bullet, and of course the larger the latter, the less the penetration, and, the bullet being greatly weakened, the greater the risk of its flying to pieces upon meeting with any substantial resistance.

Apropos of firing at one animal and hitting another, I have seen and heard of some very peculiar incidents, verging on the marvellous, and perhaps it may be of interest if I cite one or two which have happened to myself.

I was on one occasion trying a long sparsely-wooded gully for a buck for my larder. I had a little "nipper" with me just to fire the patches in places and walk through some of the thicker scrub—in fact, to make himself generally useful. When we reached the head of the gully, where the bush widened out considerably, I sent the youngster in on the far side, telling him to fire the grass from the ridge down to the bush. I was standing half-way up the ridge which we had been hunting along, with some slightly rising ground, beyond which lay a shallow depression, exactly in front of me. Before long a young ram reedbuck ran out from the head of the bush. Although at first hidden from my view, I could hear the youngster's shrill treble, "Nay 'nhlango, baas!" ("There's a reedbuck, sir!"), followed by other words which I could not clearly catch. I was on the *qui vive*, though, and soon

saw the reedbuck going steadily up the ridge, just at the far edge of the dip to which I have referred. The smoke from the grass-fire was rather dense, but the distance less than 120 yards, so when the buck came abreast of me I fired and dropped him. I saw the youngster come running over towards me, shouting at the top of his little voice, but I reached the reedbuck before him, as I hurried to give it another shot, seeing it was struggling to rise. The lad capered about like a little imp, chattering away so volubly the while that I could scarcely get a word in: he told me in reply to my question that I had shot a duiker as well as the reedbuck over which we then stood! He walked with me to the rising ground across which I had fired at the reedbuck, and there, sure enough, just on the slope, we found a duiker ewe, stone-dead. My bullet had passed through its head from ear to ear, and travelling on, had brought down the reedbuck with a broken back, proving that, supposing my aim on the reedbuck to have been true, the bullet had been deflected but very slightly from its course by striking the duiker. The latter had been hopping up the ridge, and though hidden from me by the rising ground, must just have crossed the line of fire, and the bullet, skimming low over the ridge, passed through its head. The boy, who of course could see the whole affair very plainly from the other side, said they both dropped at once. The distance from where I stood to the duiker was 92 yards, and from the duiker to the reedbuck 25 yards. The rifle was a '461 Gibbs' Metford, with a solid bullet of 540 grains.

Having marked a bushbuck early one morning into a patch of cover, I walked over to the spot, carrying a double 12 rifle. Before I reached it, however, the buck shifted farther up the ridge and entered another patch, and as I passed he ran out down the ridge, and then crossed the spur about 100 yards in front of me. I fired, and, as I believed, distinctly heard the bullet hit; but though I searched carefully for half an hour or so, I found no trace of the buck. Walking on down the spur, intending to try the patch which I had seen the buck enter in the first instance, a small sapling drew my attention. As I went up to it I saw that it originally ran up to a height of about three feet from the ground with but one stem, then divided into two branches, the diameter of the stem at the junction of these

branches being about three inches. When I saw it, the two branches had been cut off, and lay just hanging by a few stringy shreds to the parent-stem, one on each side. It was the shattered appearance of the stump, with its white heart showing out clearly, that first drew my attention to it, and I saw at once that the heavy 2½-ounce bullet had struck the tree and thus splintered it; but I was not prepared to find, on approaching closer, a duiker lying dead just behind it with its head shattered to pieces. It had evidently been standing directly behind the sapling, watching me probably through the fork. One other instance, and perhaps the most curious of all, as it deals with both fur and feather. Firing at a reedbuck one afternoon as it ran through very high grass, fully 250 yards distant, I saw him swerve suddenly from his course, and at that moment a large pauw (Kori bustard) flew up out of the grass at his feet. I was not sure whether the buck had been alarmed by the pauw and thus caused to swerve, or whether he had got my bullet. I fancied I had hit him, however, and followed him some distance over the ridge, but never saw him again. But my surprise can be imagined when, on going back to the spot where the buck had been running when I fired, I found another pauw lying dead in the grass, with my bullet through its breast. Such incidents occur perhaps more frequently than those who have had but little experience in the hunting-veldt would imagine, and probably more often than the sportsman himself thinks for.

I would be afraid to say how many reedbuck—not to mention bushbuck, oribi, klipspringer, duiker, and pigs—have from time to time fallen to my rifle in and around 'Mgiyo's vlei. Given ordinary luck, one could be certain of seeing eight or ten of these antelope any day, during a two hours' ride through and around the vlei; though, as I suppose luck does not stick consistently to any one, I of course have had my fair share of blank days, and of others—the recollection of which, unfortunately, is but too clearly impressed upon my mind—which have only been blanks from my own fault, off-days upon which I could hit nothing. But that day which stands out before all others, imaged in red letters upon my mind, is the one upon which I bagged the quite celebrated "black ram," the *'mtakati w'enhlango* of the vlei. I had heard a great deal of him from the natives, of his size, his cunning,

his immunity from harm ; but though I had, as I believed, often seen his huge *leg-plek* (laying-place, "seat"), I had never till this day actually set eyes upon him. A continuance of bad weather, with heavy rain, had prevented me from going out shooting ; but when my larder was actually empty, I took advantage of a slight break in the weather to go out to the vlei, without either boy or dog, and on foot, for the purpose of replenishing my store.

It is needless to state that no idea ever crossed my mind, as I hurried through the wet grass and scrub towards the vlei, that I should see the well-known ram ; yet the hope of doing so some day was ever present with me. Though the early morning had been cold, damp, and showery, it cleared up somewhat by 9 A.M. when I reached the vlei, and set to work most diligently to beat the low thick cover in the vicinity of 'Mgiyo's mealie-gardens ; but everything was very moist and unpleasant, and I was soon as thoroughly wet through as my surroundings. For nearly two hours I scrambled uncomfortably about through the wet cover, until about 11 A.M. the damp mist partially cleared away and the sun came out of the clouds with intense fierceness ; but still I persevered in beating the dense matted scrub along the edge of the vlei, going to every spot I could think of, likely and unlikely ones each receiving a fair share of attention. But nothing showed up. By mid-day the heat was so intense that flesh and blood could stand it no longer, so I sought shelter under some large rocks, near to a spot where on a previous occasion I had some great sport with a troop of bush-pigs. As I approached the rocks, a duiker scuttled out from the long grass at my feet, and bounded off with that aggravating india-rubber-ball-like action which makes these wariest of small antelope so difficult to hit with a rifle. By running forward and jumping on to a low rock I was enabled to see her turn short up to the right, making apparently for a small thick patch of cover on the upper edge of a slight swampy hollow. Just as I was about to try a shot, she stopped suddenly, and turning her head, looked towards me. Next moment I touched the trigger and dropped her dead. This ewe had a small pair of horns, about an inch in length, and is the only one of the sex carrying horns that I ever bagged,¹ though I know of other instances of their being shot. I carried her over

¹ I have since then shot one other on the Letaba.

to the rocks, where I intended to halt for a smoke before returning homewards, and throwing her down in a shady spot, fell to on a tree laden with the delicious '*manombela* fruit, which occupied the best part of an hour. Shouldering my buck, at last I set off on my return journey, intending to cross the vlei, and walk quietly along on the other ridge, in hopes of putting up something else, as the duiker, though better than nothing, was all too small for my requirements.

When yet about 100 yards from the crossing-place, I was glancing up and down the opposite ridge, and suddenly, as I stood for a moment, I saw away to my left on the side of the ridge, evidently startled by something from the very edge of the vlei, a large dark-coloured object, moving quickly through the long grass.

Could I believe my eyes? Surely on what might be called an "off-day" such a piece of luck cannot be in store for me! But a second glance was scarcely necessary, for I knew almost intuitively that it was the fabled black ram I was looking at. He was nearly 400 yards distant, and going at the usual slow, easy canter—peculiar to these bucks and koodoo alike, when not seriously alarmed—and hitherto quite unconscious of my presence. To drop low in the grass and take a good look at him through the field-glasses occupied me but a few seconds, and with this aid I could distinctly make out the splendid dark coat—appearing darker with the wet from the grass upon it—and fine curved horns of this really noble old buck. Raising the sight of my rifle, I quietly waited to see the direction he took, for I would have risked a long shot if he had appeared to be going away from me. Instead of this, however, he was gradually lessening his distance, though still heading for the lower part of the ridge below the falls, and I knew that once over the ridge he was probably lost to me. Almost breathlessly I watched, as he entered a little patch of cover on the edge of a more extensive straggling bit of low bush. Suddenly he stopped, but so completely was he hidden in the scrub that I could only see his head and neck as he looked hard towards me. The odds were too great for a shot, so I still waited, till at last he cantered on again towards the larger bush. I had made up my mind to fire as soon as he passed out on the other side of this, but he stopped right in

the middle of it, and where again it was impossible for me to fire. After standing there for fully quarter of an hour, down he dropped! I had already taken note of the lie of the ground, and after waiting a few moments to give him time to settle himself, I crept towards the bank of the vlei, over which I slipped—ten feet of a drop and through a network of brambles. Here I put a fresh cartridge in my rifle, had a long drink, and after tightening up my belt, waded through the muddy vlei and climbed out on the other bank. Keeping under cover of some of the long reeds and scrub which grow luxuriantly in such places, I entered an extensive swamp, the surrounding ground being all too much exposed in the event of the buck standing up again—which, however, they seldom do. Step by step I plodded along through the swamp, my brown-paper boots (for you can't get a decent pair of boots in the country), perfectly useless for keeping out water, sinking often knee-deep, and churning the mud till it stuck like glue.

But these were matters not worth consideration with so fine a prize before me. At last I reached the side of the ridge on which lay the buck, but upon reaching the ground I had marked, I found, as usual, that it looked very different from what it did when seen from a distance. That which had appeared to me to be an open hillside was really very undulating, and the patch of bush into which I had marked the buck was on the top of one of the rises, over which I could not see, when approaching from the bottom. The bush too, I saw, was very thick and of much larger area than I had imagined. Fully 30 yards I walked into it, with rifle cocked, expecting every moment to hear the rush of the game as he broke out. Hard lines if I was going to lose him after all; for I began to think I must be going wrong, and that it was even betting he would run out either behind me or a long way off on either side! At last, as I could see across to the other edge of the scrub, I pulled up, and still no ram! Turning slightly to the left in the direction from which he had entered the patch, I was about to advance again, when I heard a quick rush at the lower corner. I knew he was out, and regardless of torn flesh and clothes, I darted into the open and up on to the small ridge in front. Only just in time, by Jove! for there he was, dipping over the low ridge, merely his hind-quarters and fan-

spread tail in sight, over 100 yards away. A quick snap-shot was the only chance, but when I heard the dull "clap" which followed, I knew it was all up with the old ram. Running quickly forward as I shoved in another cartridge, I saw him down, but he at once struggled wildly to rise. In vain, poor brute, his hind-quarters were powerless; but he struggled so viciously that I could not get at him with the knife, and had to finish him with another bullet. This ram, which I got three of 'Mgiyo's people to carry home for me, was, I think, the largest I have ever shot. His horns were very thick and heavy, and measured $15\frac{1}{2}$ inches over the curve. His hide was singularly dark in colour, a very unusual thing with old bucks, which, as a rule, get to be pale ash-grey. I had no means of weighing him, but I am certain he would scale over 200 lb. The largest reedbuck, in point of weight, that ever I heard of as having been scaled, went 207 lb., and I am sure this ram would not be far off that weight.

As is the case with all wild herbivorous animals, especially the antelopes, the reedbuck is marvellously tenacious of life. I will relate an experience of mine in support of the fact, though the details are by no means pleasant. I had a number of boys engaged in erecting a wattle house for me, but on the day in question I managed to spare some of them to accompany me, as I had resolved to devote the day to a good shoot in the neighbourhood of the old vlei, and with this intention had issued full instructions to them on the previous day. Muntumuni, one of the best hunting Kafirs I ever had, was of the party, and an after-rider on one of my horses. The day broke gloriously fine, without a cloud to be seen in the sky; and after a hasty breakfast, we saddled up and set out just when the sun tipped the hills, meeting the remainder of the boys on the ridge above the old kraals. Three others had, uninvited, joined the party, but as on such occasions "the more the merrier," I gladly accepted their services. Arrived at 'Mgiyo's, I consulted with the elder boys as to the best plan of hunting the two kloofs at the head of the vlei, from which I confidently expected to turn out a bushbuck. We decided to enter below and hunt up; so hitching the horses to a bush, the kloof being impassable on horseback, I crossed it on foot with my after-rider, and ascended the opposite spur between

the two kloofs. Whilst still struggling amongst the creepers and thorns on the edge of the bush, we heard a shout from the boys, and soon learned that a bushbuck ewe was afoot. Although I toiled hard to reach the brow of the hill in time, I was unsuccessful, and the buck reached the shelter of the next kloof. Boys always get wildly excited when beating cover or bush, and many and many a buck that comes out past the guns, running for dear life as though a pack of wild dogs was at its heels, would have taken it far more easily and quietly, and given a decent shot, if the boys below only exercised their lungs a little less. In fact, perfect silence is advisable when once the buck has started and gone ahead towards the guns. Of course if the game shows any sign of trying to break back it is a different matter, but in nine cases out of ten they will go forward if the line is properly kept and the beaters do not straggle.

Later on, this bush-buck was again started, and my after-rider had two flying shots at her, but missed each time. After hunting a patch of thick bush on the opposite side which we drew blank, we crossed back, and had the satisfaction of seeing that one of the horses had broken away, and I only secured him after a good gallop on the other. It was then nearly mid-day, so we gave the boys a brief rest, and then started off down the vlei, painfully conscious that our day had commenced none too well. But I knew the old vlei aforetime, and had small doubt but that we should see some sport. At length we reached a patch of long dry *tambuki* grass, on a very favourite ridge of mine, and at once set fire to it along the upper edge. Skirting the fire, I posted my after-rider on the ridge, and had barely selected a decent position for myself when the beaters started yelling like fiends, and guided by the voice and gestures of an '*mfana*' (boy) on the other side of the vlei, I galloped forward in time to see a couple of bush-pigs run out on the next ridge about 180 yards distant. I fired, but missed, eventually giving them three more shots, the last of which told. The wounded one turned at once along the ridge, which it crossed, closely pursued by the dogs, and made for the cover over on the other side, down by the river. I did not leave my post, as I expected to get a shot at the other pig, but afterwards learned that it had turned up towards the rough krantz bordering the edge of the valley. As I jumped into the

saddle again, after waiting a few minutes, I saw the wounded pig, with the dogs very close behind him, enter a strip of bush where I had shot a pig the previous week, the dogs having turned him from his original point on the river. My after-rider coming up, we tried to get the horses through the vlei, but the rains had made it impassable; so leaving them standing with reins down, we got through on foot, the muddy slush taking us nearly waist-deep. Once through, we ran up towards the cover where we could hear the dogs barking, and knew that they had the pig at bay; but before we reached the spot, some of the other boys ran in and put an end to the fray with their assegais.

The pig turned out to be a fine young boar; my bullet had broken its hind-leg below the hock. I now heard that a good ram reedbuck had got up from the fire on the top of the ridge, but could not glean much information as to the direction it had taken. After dragging the pig into the shade, we skirted both sides of the ridge, and returned up the banks of the vlei, but without starting anything except some of the ubiquitous '*mavondwe*—ground-pigs—of which the dogs killed three. These animals, by the way, are most delicious eating, especially if parboiled and then baked. I had started the boys to burn a small patch of grass at the edge of a narrow gully, and was watching for a buck to break out, when my after-rider called out, "Buka, buka, nay 'nhlango!" ("Look, look, there's a reedbuck!") It was a good ram, and he had evidently been standing up on the ridge watching—roused from his "seat" probably by the general noise and the crackling of the burning scrub. He started to run as I saw him; so telling my after-rider to remain where he was, in case the buck took down the ridge, I galloped up the slope to try and cut him off. I was soon hidden from sight in a hollow, but on topping the ridge failed to see the buck anywhere. I knew that I ought to have come out nearly on top of him, and his disappearance was mysterious, to say the least. It appeared that he had turned off suddenly down the ridge, run to a patch, and believing himself unseen, lain down. Three or four of my youngsters actually crept up to within assegai-throwing distance of him as he lay, but all managed to miss him, the weapons glancing from the thick twigs and other obstructions. The buck sprang up, all unseen by me, and crossing the gully, headed

straight away for the vlei at the bottom. Here my after-rider missed a long shot, but watching him cross, marked him down to a gully three-quarters of a mile away; and thither, after recrossing the vlei, we rode together, all the boys making off up another spur to try and head the buck should he attempt to break back. When about half-way up the ridge, I saw that unless I hurried up, the boys—who had not seen the exact spot where the buck had disappeared—would put him up too far off for a shot. So I galloped on as hard as I could, and scarcely reached a small stretch of open flat when I saw the ram going across the spur in front of me as hard as he could lay legs to the ground, and about 120 yards distant. I jumped down at once and gave him a shot behind the shoulder, but too high and too far back: the bullet, a 590-grain solid, we afterwards ascertained, passed clean through him. I fired a second shot as he was running down the slope nearly stern on, the bullet entering just below the tail. This tumbled him over, and a couple of Kafir dogs got hold of him, but he soon kicked clear, and got up, running as if untouched down the gully. The dogs were quite at fault here, in fact they could not well help it, for they had been pretty roughly kicked by the buck; but as no one saw the latter cross the gully, we thought he must have dropped somewhere in the scrub. We searched high and low in vain, but at last a boy discovered the ram's spoor 300 yards away down the gully; and then commenced a stern chase, such as would have been deemed impossible with so badly wounded an animal in front of us. Fortunately we had a dog with us, a nondescript marvel, by name 'Mfazi (Wife), although he belonged to the other sex. He had no looks to recommend him, and no speed—in fact he was as ugly as sin, and a good smart tortoise could give him points, but he was all nose; and I think I have never seen his equal on spoor. He proved as useful as he was ugly, which is saying a great deal, for like a fate that dog followed the wounded buck mile after mile, at a slow jogging pace, but without a check, through all his twistings and turnings. As soon as I saw that the pursuit bade fair to be a long one, I sent boys back to bring on the dead pig; and it was well I did so, for sundown saw us apparently as far from the object of our search as ever.

At last, however, perhaps when we all least expected it, after turning up a long steep hill, and keeping the ever-wagging tail-stump of the indefatigable 'Mfazi before us, we caught sight of the buck standing amongst a mass of large granite boulders upon a ridge fully 400 yards distant. The boys spotted him first, and I could with difficulty pick him up in the fast-gathering dusk; but the buck saw us quite as soon, and sick though he must have been, started off again at a great pace; but it was his last effort. We met a cattle-herd a little farther on, who told us he had seen the buck and had plainly noticed blood on its flanks. And so we passed on, with but one desire in my mind at any rate—to put the poor brute out of the fearful pain he must have been enduring. The spoor led us down to the river again, and through some deserted mealie-gardens, then over the ridge on which we had caught sight of the buck, another three-quarters of a mile over some terribly rough ground, then up the face of a steep stony hill covered with *rhenoster-bosch* and other low scrub. Here it seemed the buck had felt his strength inadequate to the task of surmounting the hill, as had evidently been his first intention, for he had turned off at right angles, and held along the stony slope, over fearfully rough ground, where tracking in the evening gloom would have been impossible but for the assistance of our ugly canine friend. I had, after all, commenced to despair of getting up to the buck, especially when on the edge of a shallow gully running down the hillside I saw 'Mfazi casting about amongst the rocks, evidently at fault. We halted, and just then one of the boys touched me on the arm and pointed silently up to a great jumbled heap of stones and huge boulders about 100 yards above us on the hillside. There at last stood the unfortunate buck, evidently quite done, with crimped back and hanging head, heedless now of the near proximity of his relentless foes. Taking as good an aim as the poor light would admit of, I fired; the buck sprang high into the air, and rolled over and over down the hillside, dead, breaking one of his horns in the fall. I was astounded when I came to examine the two wounds he had previously received, as it certainly seemed an impossibility for an animal thus injured to run the distance he had done. The first bullet entered, as I have described, too far back behind the shoulders, and passed clean through him; the second, catching

him below the tail, had completely raked him, cutting the left lung in its course, and passing out between the neck and shoulder. It was very late ere we returned that night, thoroughly fagged; but it was some small gratification to know that we had put an end to the poor brute's misery, and spared him the torture of passing the night in such a state.

Such unfortunate incidents will happen, though no one can regret them more keenly than does the sportsman himself.

CHAPTER II.

SPORT AT 'SIHLANHLANA'S.

Native hospitality—Limited commissariat—Vervet monkeys—Good news—Unavoidable evils—Children of the sun—Wild dogs—Perseverance rewarded—Two ram reedbuck—Firing the grass—A bushbuck ram started—Extremity and opportunity—Death in the flames—Dogs missing—Duiker caught—*Water-hout-boom*—Lying close—A heavy ram—The day's bag—A turn after pigs—A scratch gang—Bushbuck, 'msumbi, and duiker—Riding a reedbuck down—Takes to cover—An apparition—Ehlanzeni—Cheeta—Following blood-spoor—Return for assistance—A race to the river—Bagged—A day of rest—A "fluke" shot—Bagged—Bag a well-known ram—A curious incident—Sport with reedbuck—A wet day—Calculations—An old bushbuck—Seven days' sport—Remarks upon the reedbuck—Fawns—Whistling—Rushing from cover—Taking to water—The nagor—A misnomer—Measurements—Types of horns.

A VERY favourite spot of mine for visiting in search of small game, during the months when fever is rife in the Low Country, was a district on the lower Sabi river, near to its junction with another and smaller one, known locally as the Mankambeni.

'Sihlanhlana, a petty 'Mbaya chief, lived there—poor, but, as is often the case, most hospitable; and he used to look forward keenly to my visits. Each received his *quid pro quo*—I my sport, and he a supply of food for himself and people. The following extracts from my diary kept at the time of my last trip to those parts will serve to illustrate the kind of sport which could be there obtained:—

October 30.—Having arranged for a week at 'Sihlanhlana's, and my few necessities packed up over night, breakfasted at 7 A.M., after a bath in the creek, and made a start at 7.45 A.M.

Took five boys with me, on foot, an after-rider on my black gelding 'Sandhlana, while I rode Ehlanzeni, a well-trying and fast shooting-pony. Carried my single 500 W.R., and an old sporting M.H. rifle. Mealie-meal, biscuits, salt, coffee, bacon, sugar, comprised my commissariat. Rode ahead with 'Mkuhlu, off-saddled half an hour at the Sabani stream, and reached 'Sihlanhlana's at 3 P.M., having seen no game on the way. Close on the edge of the mealie-gardens we noticed a very large troop of "blue monkeys," as the vervets (*Cercopithecus lalandi*) are called locally. There must have been fully two hundred of them, playing about in an extensive grove of 'mngcosi-trees, busily engaged amongst the astringent plums which they bear. One tree in particular was alive with the little fellows, their quaint black faces, fringed with white hairs, peeping curiously and saucily out from amongst the clusters of dark-green leaves. Fancy 'Sihlanhlana has a busy time of it when the mealies ripen, with so many of these mischievous depredators ever on the lookout for the wherewithal to fill their hungry maws! Country generally burnt off, but several close patches left, affording ample cover for game. Off-saddled and turned our nags loose. 'Sihlanhlana gave us glowing accounts of the amount of game about; but he always does, and I have long ago learned that a modicum of salt is a necessary aid to the digestion of this worthy man's reports, for he is particularly optimistic where his inner man is concerned. My boys turned up shortly after 5 P.M.; had a good square meal, and plenty of sweet milk, and all turned in early, a good hut having been prepared for myself and party.

October 31.—Confound those cockroaches! How they did worry last night! I dislike "bugs" (as a Yankee would term them) of all sorts, and of the least harmful of them I think the cockroach is the worst. But one must take the bitter with the sweet in sport as in all else.

A most unfavourable morning,—overcast, with a high wind, and passing showers—weather in which buck won't lie close. Not having come all this distance to sit out the entire day by a smoky fire, I mustered my unwilling boys—Kafirs, true children of the sun, dread wet and cold as they dread evil spirits—saddled up the nags, and set out, keeping towards the Sabi. Missed two shots at a duiker, and soon after put out

another on a high ridge; missed this one also—a long running shot at 300 yards. Off-saddled about noon, and got into broken country along the banks of the river; found remains of duiker and bushbuck ewe devoured by wild dogs. The ridges near the Sabi are covered with dense low brushwood, and shooting is difficult, it being almost impossible to hit a running duiker. Hunted many likely and unlikely places without success, but “struck oil” at last, a very fine ram reedbuck jumping up on my left, between the two horses, and running back. As I pulled up and dismounted, a ewe got up close by, followed by another ram and ewe, 50 yards or so away. The big ram ran straight and smoothly, and I dropped him with my first shot; the smaller ram, going away exactly behind me, ran low through the trees and scrub, and I missed two shots at him. Mounting and galloping along the ridge, I saw him turning down towards the river, one of the ewes running wide of him 200 yards away. Jumping down just as the ram appeared about to stand near a thickish clump of bush, I made a lucky shot and dropped him. Some women hoeing in the gardens across the spruit marked one of the ewes as she lay down, and shouted to me the direction; but as we had two rams, did not care about going farther for them, but returned to the kraal. The ram first shot carried a very thick pair of horns, $13\frac{1}{2}$ inches from base to tip. Day's bag—two ram reedbuck.

November 1.—Fine clear morning. An early bath and breakfast enabled us to get away by 7.30 A.M., accompanied by my own boys and two of 'Sihlanhlana's sons, keen little chaps, active and wiry as baboons. Crossed the stream near the kraal, and kept down the ridge, close to the spruit, heading for the river. Put out a duiker, but did not get a shot. Set boys to beat out large patch of dry grass, and while waiting ahead of the beat, spotted a bushbuck ewe standing just on the edge of a thick clump of bush, which partially hid her, and from which she had probably been watching me for some time. She dived back into the bush instantly, before I could fire, the flash of another dun hide amongst the trees telling that a ram had been with her. The boys fired the grass in the middle of the patch, and riding round towards the upper end of it, I saw a duiker hopping out across my front. Fired two shots at her. At the second she turned

and ran down through thick cover to the river. Thinking I had hit her, was just about to race after her, when a shout of "Nansi 'nkunzi 'mbabala!" ("There's a bushbuck ram!") from the boys caused me to look in the direction in which they pointed, towards a small gully full of rank green grass and bush, from which clouds of dense smoke were rolling upwards and spreading over the whole slope. Noisy flocks of lilac-breasted rollers (*Coracias caudata*)—the erroneously-styled "blue jay" of colonists—and other insectivorous birds, darted about hither and thither through the smoke, taking advantage of the discomfiture of their insect prey. Through the thick brown smoke I made out the ram, about 130 yards distant, hopping along quietly on the other side of the gully, and I fired at once: the bullet "clopped" loudly, and the ram turned short round and ran back along the ridge, skirting the fire. Galloping in pursuit, I saw him turn into a patch of burning bush before he had run 150 yards. The dense smoke prevented me from seeing more, and the flames were leaping so high and travelling so rapidly before the high wind, I could not get near the bush to search for him. In a quarter of an hour the bush burnt itself out, and amongst the smoking *débris* I found the ram dead, the skin charred to a cinder, and a good pair of 13-inch horns spoiled; but as the meat was good, that troubled no one but me. Saddled-off for half an hour, while the boys cooked the tit-bits on the ashes, and here I missed Rover and Lion. Thinking that possibly I had hit that duiker and the dogs had found it, some of us walked over towards the spot, calling the dogs, and met Rover returning, blood on his muzzle and fore-paws. It took us an hour, though, to find the buck, which had got one of my bullets, probably the second, through its ribs; the dogs had then collared and killed it in the river under a steep bank. The fire had passed right over them, the grass around being all burnt off and the dogs' hair singed. Saddled-up again, sent two boys to carry the meat back to camp, and crossed the stream to hunt opposite ridge. Put out three duikers on the slope of a long ridge; missed shots at two of them, and a little farther on a ewe reedbuck got up. Jumping out behind me, she was over the ridge before I could fire, and though I followed her over, lost her eventually in a thick grove of trees. Thinking she had lain down in a strip of cover near

the creek, I rode through it, and put out a duiker ram, which I knocked over as he ran, an easy shot, out of the opposite bank. At the shot a reedbuck got out at the far end of the grove of trees, out of range; it was probably the one I had been following, and which had allowed me to pass within 20 yards of her without getting up. Hung the duiker in a tree, and rode on up the creek, not seeing my boys anywhere; but was soon joined by my after-rider. Passing close to a great *water-hout-boom* (a spongy tree, always found in the vicinity of water, and the wood of which is used for making brake-blocks), we had left it several yards behind us, and were emerging from the end of a narrow patch of scrub in the bend of the vlei, when two ewe reedbucks jumped out behind us, from a spot quite close to the tree, and not a dozen yards from where we had ridden along. They ran awkwardly, and my first shot missed. The second I fancied hit, just as they topped the ridge, and I at once mounted and gave chase. Racing down the other side, through the low scrub, saw a reedbuck standing in some bush on my right, in a half-crouching attitude; and thinking it was the one I had fired at, pulled up, jumped down, and fired a quick shot, just as she was moving off. She ran like the mischief for about 50 yards and fell dead, shot through the heart. There was no other wound upon her. Boys and dogs joined me here, so we put the ewe on my horse, and I sent the after-rider back with 'Sandhlana to fetch the duiker.

Returning towards the kraal, a boy leading my horse, I was walking ahead, when on the low ridge behind the huts the dogs put up a reedbuck ram 200 yards on our left. It ran straight towards us, dogs full cry after him, and so close to him I dare not fire; but he turned short round on seeing us, and went away down the spur with long steady bounds, his white fanlike tail spread out very prettily. I made a lucky shot, bringing him down in his tracks, the solid 590-grain bullet going clean through him from end to end. We let it lie there, and on reaching the kraal, sent some of 'Sihlanhlana's folk to bring it in. The horns were only 11½ inches, but he was a heavy-bodied animal. A good day—bag consisting of one ram and one ewe reedbuck, one bushbuck ram, one duiker ram, and one duiker ewe.

November 2.—Cloudy and cool. After seeing the meat hung up, started on foot with twenty of the kraal boys, and my own,

to hunt a kloof or two for pigs. Three kloofs drawn blank gave us a bad start, and at noon a cold rain commenced to fall, and did not hold up except at very brief intervals throughout the remainder of the day. The boys of course hunted badly, as these scratch gangs of natives almost invariably do: they come out with the intention of getting as much meat as they can by the least possible amount of exertion to themselves. After much hard work, managed to secure a ram bushbuck and two bush-pigs, one of the latter being bayed by my dogs, and despatched with assegais.

November 3.—Took only my after-rider with me to-day, giving the other boys and dogs a rest in camp. Weather fine. Unpleasantly hot in the afternoon. Tried the bush again which we burnt off on the 1st, but found the scrub around the edge too thin to afford shelter for bushbuck, which, as a rule, far prefer to lie in the dense tangled cover on the kloof-edges and round bush-clumps than in the bush itself, provided the scrub is thick enough. I led the boy's horse towards some large boulders about 100 yards from the bush, up one of which I climbed, while the boy went inside to beat. I got a very indifferent shot at a bushbuck ewe, which, refusing to take the open, stole swiftly away towards the creek, through some low green scrub. At the end of the bush a little 'msumbi jumped up at the boy's feet, and coming straight for me, rolled over like a rabbit to a lucky shot. We then crossed the stream and kept away over the long ridges in the direction of the old Delagoa Bay waggon-road. Put up a large duiker ram, very close, but did not get a shot till he got clear of a lot of low scrubby bush, and then missed him. Edging away down towards the river, we put out a reedbuck ram, full grown, but with small horns. Of course he jumped out behind us, and ran back down the ridge; but I was off, and got a shot, though, as I afterwards found out, missing him. At the time I fancied I hit, and raced after him across a small gully, in the direction in which we had been riding. Well mounted on nearly the best shooting-horse I ever owned, and feeling him pulling eagerly at his bridle as if to say, "Come on, let me go!" I gave my good nag his head, determined to see if I could run into the buck. Gaining at first, I soon after nearly lost him, almost getting bogged in a treacherous piece of marshy ground, which

the reedbuck negotiated in safety, and beyond which he got out of sight. Viewing him again, I saw he was going harder, but Ehlanzeni was warming to his work also, and getting over the ground at such a pace that it would have puzzled any but a good horse to stick to him. Once the ram made a false step, and I thought he was coming over; but not a bit of it,—it only urged him to renewed exertions, as he once more turned down the ridge, heading away towards a point of the river in the direction of camp. But a game horse is a wonderful creature, and when at last the buck ran into an old deserted mealie-garden, in which brambles, *insangu* (wild hemp), and "black-jacks" grew in wild profusion, he had a lead of barely 60 yards. Here, as I feared, he turned short off into the thickest cover, and I again lost sight of him; but trusting to chance, and keeping somewhere in the right direction, I felt almost certain of coming up with him, as my good horse was running strongly and getting over the thorny obstacles so easily.

Brushing through some thinner scrub on the right, I suddenly came on the ram standing under a bush, with his head hanging and flanks heaving. The apparition was so entirely unexpected by my nag that he stopped short, and sprang to one side so suddenly that I shot over his head, rifle and all, turning a complete somersault into a patch of brambles and "black-jacks." I was on my feet again quickly enough, and saw the ram walking slowly through the bushes. Running quietly up behind him, as he stopped, half turning to look round, I shot him dead. When my after-rider came up we examined the buck very carefully for a previous wound, but to our surprise found no other but the one which killed him; indeed there appeared nothing wrong with him, and his legs were clean and sound. After this plucky run I would certainly have spared his life, but that I had all along thought he was wounded by my first shot. My good bay showed no signs of unusual fatigue, but we gave him a long off-saddle after his heavy run. I have shot many a head of game, large and small, from him, and he never has played me false. Poor Ehlanzeni! he is now sleeping his last sleep down in the far-distant Low Country. After saddling-up again, we were riding quietly along, talking, when the boy pointed out some object in a patch of ferns to our right, at the bottom of a rather deep donga. It looked very like

a buck; but as it was an awkward place to get a horse down, I dismounted and walked towards the spot. It was only a stone after all, but as I retraced my steps towards the horses, I suddenly caught sight of a large cheeta creeping low through some scrub across the donga. I fired at once, for he would have been out of sight in another minute, and evidently hit him. A second shot, as he bounded off growling in the scrub, missed. I made a mistake in following on foot; but my horse being in the opposite direction, I feared it would take too long to catch him. The boy, however, galloped round to the head of the donga, leading my nag, and we searched about together for the cheeta. He had gone away, however, but we soon found the blood-spoor, and followed it up and across the ridge; but after holding it for over 200 yards it became so faint that we decided to go back to the kraal for the dogs. We were soon back on the spoor with two of my dogs and half-a-dozen Kafirs, and carried it away with some difficulty for about half a mile, and then completely lost it in some scrub on the edge of a small thicket of closely-growing dwarfed trees. Here we opened out more, searching in all directions for some sign of spoor, but for some time found nothing. The dogs were sniffing suspiciously on the grass near to the trees, but as they did not appear very eager over it, I turned aside, and was looking about through some detached clumps of bush near by, when I heard a shout from some of the boys, followed by a low growl. I ran to my horse, and jumped into the saddle at once—no easy matter, for he kept backing, excited by the shouting and gesticulations of the Kafirs at his head—and raced off in the direction in which the boys were pointing. It was a long open ridge, good going, and though 'Sandhlana was not an Al shooting-horse, he was a flyer, and I very soon saw the cheeta in front of me, the dogs running wide of him on one side, but some distance behind. As he entered a long strip of bush, extending for some 400 yards, near a bend of the river, I was close behind him, but it was too thick for the horse to get through; so I galloped round, and dismounting on the edge of some thick scrub, ran forward to try for a shot, thinking the cheeta would make for the cover on the river-bank. Just in time, for he had got out of the bush, and was making along under a low bank, through the long grass, for the river. He must have crouched as I came on

him, and nearly let me pass him; then he sprang up and dashed past me towards the bush with loud growls. I got in a good shot, and tumbled him over in the scrub, where he lay kicking, and another bullet finished him. The first shot had only been a flesh-wound through the hind-leg, but it had certainly very seriously inconvenienced him when running. The boys told me that he had lain very close in the thicket, to which the behaviour of the



"Then he sprang up."

dogs had attracted them, and that when one of their number went in, the cheeta sprang out. On our return to the kraal I sent boys to fetch in the 'msumbi and reedbuck, and they returned at sundown. The bag for the day was one male cheeta, length 7 feet 7 inches, one reedbuck ram, one 'msumbi ewe.

November 4.—Rested over the day, occupied skinning and preserving the cheeta-head.

November 5.—Out with both horses to-day, put up a duiker

across the river, which I missed, and later on a reedbuck ewe, at which I failed to get a shot. About noon put up a reedbuck ewe from a small patch of ferns on our right. She ran back and turned down the spruit, and as she ran hard through some cover on the bank quite 200 yards distant, I made a very pretty, if fluky, shot, rolling her over like a rabbit, the bullet entering at the back of the neck and passing out at the eye.

Later in the afternoon, put up three reedbuck whilst I was struggling knee-deep in a muddy vlei, trying to get my horse through. I hit the ram, which we afterwards secured. The boys got my horse out of the mud with difficulty. Day's bag—one ram and one ewe reedbuck.

November 6.—Fine clear day, with a cool breeze. Set out with three boys to try and beat up a big reedbuck ram which was said to frequent the extensive scrub at upper end of mealie-gardens. We drove it systematically from end to end, but unsuccessfully. Leaving it on our left, we crossed a high open ridge, where I caught sight of a reedbuck ewe going over the rise, heading for the next gully. Telling the boys to follow on slowly, I galloped in pursuit, trying to intercept her, but did not see her again. She had probably doubled back on the ridge, or lain down in some patch of cover. Pulling up for a few minutes, I dismounted and lit my pipe, keeping an eye on the long slope of the ridge before me, and listening to the advancing boys. Chancing to glance to my left in the direction the ewe had taken, to my astonishment I saw a grand old ram emerge from some low cover and canter leisurely along in front of the boys, who, however, could not see him owing to the intervening cover. He was very light in colour, his coat shining like polished silver in the early morning sunlight, and even at the distance I could see that he carried a fine head. He had not seen me; but I had not much time to waste, as directly the boys came out of the cover they saw him, and of course shouted. But the buck had no time even to quicken his pace, for I fired at once, and he fell as if struck by lightning. He struggled to his feet again as the boys ran breathlessly up, and one of them nailed him by the hind-leg, but was at once kicked over. Next moment, however, he fell dead under the assegais of the other boys. He was a fine heavy ram, very old, the head and neck of a pale blue colour owing to the

sparseness of the hairs, which allowed the skin to show between—the remainder of the body a pale greyish yellow. Horns blunt and heavy, $14\frac{1}{2}$ inches in length, and 14 inches between the tips. A bullet had at some time or other struck one horn, cutting out a large notch and exposing the bony core underneath. Shoulder height 36 inches.

About an hour after, lower down the creek, we put out a young ram and a ewe reedbuck in some long grass. I promptly missed two shots at the ram, but he ran very awkwardly. At noon, under the shade of some *'mngcosi*-trees by a shallow spruit, I knocked over a duiker which got up in front of us; and on this spot we off-saddled for an hour. A curious incident happened here. All the time we had been sitting down talking and laughing, and my horse feeding round about, a reedbuck ram had been lying under a tree barely 60 yards away. When I saddled-up, and had ridden some distance, the ram got up from the boys, who followed on foot, a shout from them apprising me of the fact. I galloped back at once, but failed to get a shot, the ram getting clean away over the ridge; but the boys marked him down to a distant gully, thinking, as they did not see him go out, we might try for him on our return. Just at the junction of a small gully and the main creek, amongst ferns and low scrub, a ram and ewe reedbuck got up about 200 yards away. I missed the ram as he disappeared over the ridge; but when in the act of mounting to give chase, another ewe got out of the small gully ahead of us, and I hit her hard with my first shot. She ran another 100 yards and stood, but I missed her; and as she turned and made off, I jumped into the saddle and galloped after her. On the other side of the ridge she turned short off, heading away for camp, and got a long start; but I came up with her again, when she crossed the creek and stood. Before I could fire she moved on another 20 yards, and lay down in a thick patch of cover. Crossing below, I rode round the patch to get above her, and on approaching the spot, got off and led my horse. The cover was less than fifty yards across, and on the edge of it I stopped and whistled loudly, without result. I could see right over the cover, but not a move betrayed her whereabouts. She had not looked like a mortally wounded buck, or I would have thought she might be lying dead inside. I advanced slowly, and,

when right in the middle of the scrub, she dashed out from under my feet and ran straight down towards the creek, with her head held low; but she did not get far, as I dropped her with my first shot. When the boys came up, I sent one back for the duiker, leaving one to cut up the reedbuck, and took the other with me, heading back towards camp.

On a long, open, burnt-off ridge we put up two more ewes, but did not fire at either; but when we reached the head of a long vlei, into the lower end of which the boys had marked the reedbuck ram at noon, I instructed them to burn off a patch of old grass lying along the vlei and under an extensive grove of shady trees. Crossing the vlei, I had barely reached a position from which I could command a view of the burning grass, when I saw a ram run out and take down the other bank of the vlei. It was a long and difficult shot, as the ram was going hard, and the intervening trees grew closely together; but my luck stood by me, for the ram dropped in his tracks to my first shot, the bullet entering the small ribs, traversing the lungs, and breaking the off fore-shoulder. I do not think this was the ram marked by the boys, as they said the other was a larger one; but it did not signify much, except to the bucks concerned.

Too late when we reached the kraal to bring in the ram shot early in the morning, so I let it lie out all night, consequently the head was quite spoiled: some eagles got at it and tore all the softer parts about the eyes and mouth. Bag for the day—two reedbuck rams, one reedbuck ewe, one duiker ewe.

November 7.—Sent all the boys—except my after-rider, who remained with me—back home with the meat, &c., two of the kraal boys assisting them. My last day proved a most unpleasant one, sharp rain falling at intervals, and a keen south-east wind blowing. I kept a very smoky fire warm during the morning, but about 2 P.M. went for a stroll on foot, alone. Put up a reedbuck ewe, three parts grown, near where I shot the big ram, but did not fire at her. Soon afterwards put out a good ram, which I missed, and though I followed him up, he got away in the thick cover near the mealie-gardens. Walking through this stuff, I saw a duiker feeding in a small open space: he looked up at once, standing exactly facing me, but behind a small sapling which covered his head and chest. Now, I felt sure that

if I wished to hit that sapling I could not have done it, for it was 130 yards distant, so I took aim carefully *at* it, expecting the bullet to shave it on one side or the other so closely that it would not fail to hit the duiker beyond; but of course the unexpected happened, my bullet striking the sapling fair in the centre, while the buck bounded away unharmed. Turning back towards the kraals, and hunting along the edge of the line of cover, I had the luck to put out an old bushbuck ram from a little detached clump of bush close to the mealie-gardens. He dashed off with a hoarse bark, giving me a flying shot as he disappeared over a low bank; but I heard the bullet "clap" loudly, and running up, found him lying under the bank, dead. He was an old stager, indeed had only one horn and the stump of a second, the sound one sharp as a needle at the tip, but much worn down on the outside edge. We got him to camp that evening, and I turned in early to be ready for an early start. Next day we left at 6 A.M., reaching my house in the afternoon. I was thoroughly well satisfied with the sport I had enjoyed, and my worthy host and his people, with whom I left plenty of meat to gladden their eyes and fill their bellies, seemed equally so with the result of my visit. In the seven days I bagged one male cheeta, three bushbuck rams, seven reedbuck rams, three reedbuck ewes, one duiker ram, two duiker ewes, one 'msumbi ewe, one bush-pig, and another bush-pig killed by my after-rider.

This bag of course did not represent anything like the number I could have secured, as I let a great number of ewes and young rams go without firing at them.

Before concluding this chapter, a few remarks upon that most sporting antelope the reedbuck (*Cervicapra arundineum*) may not be considered out of place.

At one time this animal was very plentiful all over the district of which I write, in fact from the Portuguese seaboard to the Kahlamba range, and seemed equally at home on the sweltering flats of the Low Country and the cold plateaux of the mountain-range. Wherever the country has become populated, however, it is now practically extinct, as it is a large buck, and easily shot, and has suffered accordingly.

It has been said that the reedbuck is shy and retiring in its

habits, but I have always found the very reverse to be the case. They can always be found in the near vicinity of Kafir kraals and their surrounding mealie-gardens. They are most partial to reedy spruits, and small gullies covered with bracken and low scrub, provided water be close at hand. They are also fond of lying about on open ridges and hillsides, wherever patches of long grass or other cover afford them shelter. On the Low Country flats they usually lie up during the day in little shady groves of trees, or indiscriminately in any wide area of dry grass. In fact, where reedbuck are plentiful, they may be turned up in almost any cover, though they shun deep heavy kloofs.

They are not strictly gregarious, though four or five will often be found together. Seven is the largest number I have ever put up from one spot, but, on one occasion, I saw either thirteen or fourteen *feeding* together on a patch of young grass. More frequently, however, they go in pairs, and when the ewes are in young, the rams seek cover alone. The fawns are born about December and January, and some in February, March, or April. Reedbuck will lie very close in cover, almost until trodden upon, and then get up and go away with a startling rush. When alarmed at a little distance, however, provided they have not got one's wind, they take matters far more coolly: uttering a sharp, shrill whistle, they will run a little distance, then stand, repeating the whistling sound at intervals; then they start on again, and so continue, running and standing alternately, and gazing hard at the intruder upon their domains. When put up close under foot they seldom whistle, but go off silently, and as hard as they can.

Many a fine reedbuck has met its death by giving warning of its whereabouts by its shrill whistling. This sound, however, is not uttered only as a note of alarm, as reedbuck will frequently play about all night round a camp, whistling at oft-recurring intervals. They make another very peculiar sound also, when running with a series of short jerky bounds, before they have made up their minds whether to clear off altogether or not. A dull hollow sound is then heard, which might be written "thup, thup, thup!" Evidently it is necessary that the buck be moving to produce it, as when it stops the sound invariably ceases, only to be repeated again when the animal moves on. I have never been able to discover by what means it is produced, but believe

it is by some peculiar action of the hind legs, which causes the inside portions of the thighs to strike dully against the body.

There is no prettier scene to be witnessed in the veldt than that of a fine old reedbuck ram dashing out of a patch of thick cover. He will probably lie still, and allow one to ride or walk close up to him; then with a crashing sound, such as one would think so comparatively small an animal incapable of making, out he bursts, perhaps carrying a long trailing mass of creepers on his horns, of which, however, he soon shakes himself clear. The first rush over, he quickly settles down into a long "rocking-horse" canter, or else goes "pronking" away, as the Boers style it, with snowy tail outspread, and presenting either quarter alternately to the sportsman—a really difficult shot, although it does not appear to be so.

The first rush of a reedbuck from cover is very disconcerting to an untrained horse and a young sportsman, usually causing the latter to fire too hurriedly, when by waiting he could get a better chance.

One curious fact in connection with reedbuck is well worth mentioning. When wounded—and I have sometimes known them adopt these tactics even when unwounded—they will take to any deep pool of water, and immerse themselves therein, merely leaving the nostrils above the surface, and these are usually poked up amongst the vegetation on the banks: thus it is a most difficult matter to detect them. By these means there is no doubt many a reedbuck succeeds in eluding its pursuers; for when danger is past, he quietly steals out through the reeds and gets away.

I have twice known reedbuck to be taken by crocodiles whilst hiding in this manner on the edge of deep pools. An allied form (*Cervicapra redunca*), resembling the West African Nagor, is found only in the mountainous districts, though I have met with them rarely amongst the foothills. Except where preserved, however, these are now very rare. The Boers, and in fact colonists generally, erroneously term them *rooi rhébuck*, or red rhébuck, whereas they are true reedbucks. The Kafirs note the distinction, for they call the common reedbuck *inhlango*, and *Cervicapra redunca* they style *inhlang' amatshe*—i.e., the reedbuck of the stones,

mountain reedbuck. The true or vaal rhé buck is called *iliza* by the natives.

A full-grown reedbuck ram attains a shoulder height of 37 inches, and a length over all of 6 feet from tip to tip; the ewes average 33 or 34 inches in height. The average length of the horns is 12 inches, but I have secured two pairs of 15½ inches and three of 15 inches. Two distinct types of horns will be noticed. In the one the rings grow out till they cease forming; then the base of the horns grows out smooth, or rather with shallow *longitudinal* corrugations, but always consisting of hard horny substance. In the other type the rings do not grow out, but a soft burr forms round the base of the horn until the animal is aged and the rings have ceased forming, when the growth of the burr increases, frequently attaining a great size, but always remaining soft and gelatinous. Many hold the opinion, as I did myself once, that in time this burr would harden as the base of the horn grew out, but it never does. It will be found to be almost invariably the case that where the soft burr, forming as it were an exaggerated annulation, is noticed, the horns are short, thick, and heavy,—the long thin horns usually having a hard smooth base, with the last ring well up on the horn.

CHAPTER III.

BUSH-PIG HUNTING.

Differences of opinion—A mistaken idea—Necessary qualifications—How to succeed—A worthy relative—The bush-pig—A dangerous antagonist—Remarks upon its habits—Size—Sure-footedness—Diet—Rifle *versus* assegai—Tenacity of life—Pigs sighted—A rough tussle—'Mahlatshwa wounded—A fall of 25 feet—Leopards and bush-pig—The scene of the fight—Fail to bag the leopard—Cured of his fancy for pork!—Hunting-parties—Oribi—Ram and ewe bagged—Two for one—Ram and ewe "bucks"—A stiff climb—Cheerless view—Pigs!—A lucky encounter—Racing the old boar—A trophy—The best of the fun—Spooring pigs—Watching—Assegaing a boar—Another tussle—Rij Kopjes—Visitors—A storm brewing—An African thunderstorm—Python—A struggle in the bush—Clubbed to death—Sable antelope—Not dead yet—Pigs seen—A piece of luck.

"QUOT homines, tot sententiæ," is a peculiarly happy quotation in respect of sportsmen, their likes and dislikes. Wherever a number of them are gathered together, it may be relied upon that there will be no lack of argument to season the conversation, for though all will be unanimous upon one point—the pleasure of the chase—they are in duty bound to differ upon all others: make, bore, and weight of rifles; how, when, and where to obtain the best sport; and last, but not least, the kind of game in the pursuit of which each finds the greatest pleasure.

Amongst big game the lion, tiger, elephant, buffalo, and giraffe have each their votaries; the lithe beautiful leopard affords to another the cream of sport; whilst amongst the smaller game of South Africa, the reedbuck, bushbuck, and bush-pig "take the cake," and, I think, about divide it equally.

And as in this matter, so in all others pertaining to rifles and sport generally; and it would be as unreasonable for a man to question the why and wherefore of another who differed from him in opinion, as it would be for a donkey to question the wisdom of a horse in his preference of oats and hay to thistles. After these few remarks I trust those who do not agree with me in giving my vote for the bush-pig as the pluckiest and most sporting animal amongst the smaller game will "let me down easily."

"Kafir's game that," some one amongst my brother colonists will say. Perhaps it is, in a sense, for no doubt the natives do kill numbers of them owing to the peculiar facilities their mode of life affords them of hunting these creatures, and to the fact that they are under the necessity of keeping their numbers down as much as possible for the protection of their crops. But it is not to say, therefore, that the bush-pig is ignoble game. Besides, so much depends upon the way an animal is hunted; and even the lion, that is a dangerous, bold, and therefore worthy antagonist if met on foot at early dawn by his kill, appears a very different creature if potted from a safe perch in a tree, or brought to a stand by a pack of dogs. I hope to show that most exciting sport can be got out of an animal which becomes almost vermin when bowled over by an old musket from a Kafir's watch-hole in the middle of the night. There are perhaps many who excel in the use of the rifle, who would think twice about creeping into a dense thorn-thicket, with only an assegai in hand, to tackle a good old bush-pig boar at bay.

He only will be successful in this form of sport, and enjoy it in its entirety, who is in possession of perfect health, keeps in perfect training, thoroughly understands the "nature of the beast" he is going after, and who has no material objection to his earthly tabernacle becoming transformed upon occasions into a travelling pin-cushion in a thick thorn-bush; and further—recollect I say to enjoy the sport *thoroughly*—who has learned the use of that most deadly weapon, the "stabbing assegai," at close quarters.

A somewhat formidable list of requirements, is it not? But remember there are pigs and pigs; and our friend of the African kloofs, whose acquaintance we are about to make, is a far remove from *Sus domesticus*, with his imperturbable "do-what-

you-will-with-me-but-feed-me-well" expression and easy-going manners.

I believe the oft-cited "old grey boar" of India carries the palm for staunchness, pluck, and sporting qualities from all competitors of his kind ; and with reason, judging by the unanimity of opinion expressed upon the subject by "hog-hunters." I regret to say I cannot speak from experience, but am certain that our *bosch-vark* can be no unworthy relative of his. No lazy occupant of a pen he, without a thought beyond the contents of his trough and the curl of his tail, but a tough, wiry, powerful creature, sound in wind and limb (as he will soon find out who essays to follow him on foot), eminently peaceful in disposition so long as his tail is not trodden upon, asking nothing more than to be allowed to ramble at will from kloof to kloof under the curtain of night, grubbing around after the manner of his kind for roots and berries, not unfrequently levying severe tax on the natives' mealie-gardens, and lying up during the heat of the day in the longest grass or densest cover he can find.

But rouse him, let him only hear the first whimpering of the dogs as they pick up his fresh spoor where he has been rooting around on the edge of the kloof an hour or two before, and instantly his whole being changes. Springing to his feet, he stands facing the approaching dogs, his tufted ears extended to catch every sound, his bristly mane half erect, and his fierce little eyes striving to pierce the gloom of the bush. He is ready to fight or to fly, for he can do either well ; but as his discretion is at least equal to his valour, he usually tries the latter alternative first, and so great is his strength and so fine his skill in threading the thorny intricacies of his forest home that he will tax the powers of hunters and dogs to the utmost, and after all frequently get clear away. If his attempt at flight succeeds—well and good, he can fight another day ; and if not, then also well and good, he will fight to-day with the greatest goodwill. And when he makes up his mind to fight, it is to the bitter end ; no odds he considers too great for him—he would face a regiment in line, or a battery of artillery in position ! Woe to the rash hounds that come within reach of his champing jaws and gleaming tusks ; it will surely be many a long day before they ever take the field again, even if lucky enough to escape with their lives ! He has no

idea of flinching, but just backs into a thick bush, or against a rock or tree, and with desperate, dogged determination fights to the death, which he meets with a grim silence worthy of a better fate.

The South African bush-pig is very commonly met with in all the densely-wooded kloofs amongst the foothills of the Kahlamba range, and along the bush-fringed banks of the larger rivers, but is very rarely seen out on the extensive flats of the Low Country proper, owing, I think, to the fact that in certain seasons water is very scarce, and the bush-pig dearly loves to be in the vicinity of that element. In fact, bush-pig are only really plentiful in rough broken country, well wooded; but in such places they are a perfect pest to the natives, as a troop of ten will lay waste an enormous tract of cultivated ground in a single night, doing perhaps more damage by what they trample under foot than by what they actually consume. This creature appears to be found very sparingly in the Amatonga country, and in the Portuguese territory to the north is, I believe, unknown. Its general appearance is decidedly formidable, an effect produced by the bristling mane, small deep-set eyes, the tufted protuberances on the cheeks, and the small but incisive tusks. The average height of a full-grown boar is 31 inches, and its length 5 feet; but I have one recorded in my hunting-diary 34 inches at the shoulder, and weight 245 lb. The upper canine tusks stick out almost horizontally from the jaw, the lower ones curve upwards, and have double cutting edges. The largest pair I ever secured were $4\frac{3}{4}$ inches outside the jaw. Individuals vary wonderfully in colour; the usual tint is dark-brown, but I have killed them of a warm Vandyke brown, grey, mottled brown and white, and black and white, the grey sometimes of a shade so light as to appear quite white.

The young, of which from five to ten are produced in a litter about January, are prettily striped with pale yellow and brown. They are hardy little things, and follow their mothers from the first, accompanying her in all her distant wanderings, and early displaying signs of the tireless activity which characterises the full-grown animals. They are wonderfully fleet of foot, and can travel over the roughest and most treacherous ground with unflinching sure-footedness: doubtless the small supplementary toes

above and behind each hoof are of the greatest assistance to them in such places.

The bush-pig is gregarious, being found in parties of four or five, but more frequently in troops of from ten to even twenty members. They are omnivorous, and destroy snakes and other reptiles, small birds and eggs, in addition to their vegetable diet; though I have only on one occasion seen any foreign animal matter amongst the contents of the stomach, when we found portions of a snake, probably of about 4 feet in original length, in the stomach of a sow. I also know of a case of four or five pigs eating the carcass of a bushbuck ram which I had wounded and lost two days previously. I think, considering the fact that these pigs never attain any degree of fatness, it is extremely unlikely that they can tackle a venomous snake. Except in misty or rainy weather they are very seldom seen abroad between sunrise and sunset: during that time they lie up in thick cover on the edges of the kloofs, in thick reed-beds, or in long grass on the lower slopes of the open ridges. They make most cunningly contrived shelters sometimes, such as one would imagine no brain of pig could ever conceive of, and no snout, however pliant, execute. I have seen such places perfectly dry inside during several days' heavy rain. Pigs cover a great extent of country during their night wanderings, but when they have discovered a tempting garden, will visit it night after night by precisely the same route, thereby displaying a want of caution which has proved fatal to many.

Shooting pigs with a rifle is tame work, apart from the excitement always attendant upon a bush-hunt; but I have killed a great many that way, as I have always been so situated that their destruction by any fair means has been an act of kindness to the native community around me in general. But to tackle a wounded one in a bush with an assegai, or to bring them to bag with this weapon alone in the first instance, requires a very considerable knowledge of the game, and much disregard of physical comfort. As a rule, dogs in close country will bring full-grown pigs to a stand very quickly, provided they have the pluck to follow through the really dangerous thorn-thickets which the pig takes in his line of flight. Under these circumstances they get fearfully torn and lacerated at times by

the great 4-inch thorns of the 'mcopi, and indeed only staunch dogs will face them.

If the country round the bush where the pigs are found is tolerably open, they will run great distances to reach some secure sanctuary, and it then invariably happens that one or two of the quickest dogs outstrip the rest of the pack, and are unable to cope with the pigs, and either get mauled or disheartened, and give up. When at bay a pig inflicts fearful injuries with his tusks, but in a "rough and tumble" the other teeth play the most conspicuous part. I have seen a dog's leg *bitten off* in this manner, and repeatedly have known stout assegais snapped off above the blade.

The tenacity with which these animals cling to life is marvellous, and a pig is never defeated till he is dead. How gamely a wounded one will fight to the last, is instanced by the following occurrence, which I take from my hunting-diary:—

Out on foot to the north of the kraals, accompanied by six young Swazi lads and five good dogs, on the look-out for any game we might be fortunate enough to tumble across. At mid-day we came to a halt under the shelter of a group of dwarfed 'manombela-trees, on the top of a high rough krantz overlooking the plain below, somewhat tired after a hard morning. We had been successful in bringing to bag a couple of klipspringers, a ram and ewe, each of which I shot as they sprang from crag to crag along the face of the krantz. The boys had added to the bag by bowling over a couple of hares with their kerries; so on the strength of our good fortune we were taking a long "spell," and had been sitting chatting together for an hour or more, when we simultaneously noticed five or six moving objects on the flat 200 feet below us. We quickly made them out to be bush-pigs, and decided at once to try and surround the somewhat limited extent of cover which they entered as we were watching them. Scrambling down the krantz, accompanied by Muntumuni—then only a lad, but giving promise of the rare skill and pluck in the hunting-veldt which he now possesses to perfection—I posted myself on a huge granite boulder, probably fallen from the krantz above, and which cropped up out of the surrounding bush on the edge of the cover which the pigs had entered; the other boys skirted the bush and put the

dogs in on the spoor of the pigs. Ere long the sounds from the centre of the bush proclaimed a find, and a large sow, nearly white in colour, attempted to break cover. As she dashed through the bush some 30 yards from the boulder on which we stood, a single shot from my .500 Express rolled her over with a broken back, two of the dogs, who were close on her heels, coming up for a shake at her. At the same moment we caught sight of four other pigs going out of the hill some 400 yards distant, and across a rocky creek which ran down from the krantz above and skirted the far end of the cover. The remaining three dogs held on the spoor of a fine old boar, the only one then left in the bush. He eventually broke about 120 yards distant, but certainly did not appear to be exerting himself very much to get away. As he was passing through some thickish scrub on the edge of the cover, I fired and broke his hind-leg, and the dogs coming up at once, a rare stiff tussle ensued, and the combatants quickly disappeared from view in the surrounding bush, which was very thick. I had no assegai on this occasion, as we had not been expecting pigs, and without waiting to give me one of his, Muntumuni sprang off the rock like a monkey, and, excited by the sounds of the struggle in the bush, scrambled off, assegais in hand, through the dense cover to the scene of action. The other boys soon joined in and quickly put an end to matters, because when I, following at best pace,—though I got hopelessly hooked up in one spot,—reached the scene of the struggle, the gallant boar was nearly done. 'Mahlatswa, a fine hound belonging to my Swazi host, lay, apparently bleeding to death, under a bush, with a terrible gash in his throat, and the lads who had come to the rescue each bore traces of the rough treatment they had received. Just as I appeared on the scene, Muntumuni, ever to the fore, got in a good thrust with his last assegai, the blade entering at the junction of neck and shoulder and coming out at the boar's mouth. With a mighty effort, which wrenched the weapon out of the lad's hands, the plucky boar made a desperate forward rush, overturning and cutting two other dogs, then, his strength failing him, rolled over on his side, and with his last effort biting off the assegai-shaft as if it were matchwood, died without even a groan. I carried 'Mahlatswa home on my shoulders that night, and am pleased to know he recovered, although it was a very near thing. Poor

old fellow ! he was as plucky a dog as ever lived, but too rash, and about twelve months afterwards was torn to pieces by a troop of baboons.

On one occasion I saw a boar, a stout young fellow about three-parts grown, roll 25 feet over a krantz on to stony ground, and then, picking himself up, make no attempt to get away, but coolly back in between two large rocks, and commence to make it pretty warm for some six or seven dogs, which had tackled him above on the krantz, and when he fell over had clambered down a narrow chasm, and were very soon again on his tracks. From the security of his position the boar simply laughed his foes to scorn, and they would have been forced to leave him master of the situation had not some Kafirs come up and assegaied the boar from above.

A considerable number of bush-pigs are killed by leopards, though usually those half or three-parts grown are the victims. Still I have known frequent instances of full-grown pigs being killed ; and I think it speaks well for the pluck, strength, and activity of the leopard that he is able to master such a powerful creature as a mature bush-pig. There is no doubt, however, that as a rule Spots prefers a juicy sucking-pig, and has not much stomach for a bout with a boar, an animal heavier than himself, as tough again, and possessed of substantial weapons of offence and defence. However, I once came upon a leopardess with three cubs eating a bush-pig, the remains of which, upon subsequent examination, proved to be those of an enormous boar, of a size seldom attained by them. It is just possible that the leopardess had been assisted in the capture by her mate, especially as she had quite young cubs with her. In such encounters, however, Spots does not always come off first best. I well remember, one day in 1888, being called by some Kafirs to help them drive some pigs out of a bushy kloof, said pigs having been raiding in their mealie-lands during the night, and at dawn taken to the kloof about a mile distant. The boys entered the bush with the dogs at the lower end of the kloof, whilst I took my stand at a likely spot for a break some distance up the hillside. The beat proceeded quickly up the kloof ; the pigs evidently had not delayed at the lower end. The search continued in comparative quiet for an hour or more, when at last I heard the dogs (a

lot of Kafir curs) yelping and barking excitedly in one spot, as if they held something at bay. A shout, followed by the report of a musket, made it evident that things were getting lively in the bush, and that I was out of the fun. Hesitating whether to leave my post or not, I heard shouts of "Ehla, ehla 'nkosi—nay 'ingwe!" ("Come on down, sir; it's a leopard!") Cursing my dilatoriness and want of perception, I dashed across the 50 yards of open ground in front of me, and half scrambled, half fell down the steep bank of the kloof, and, guided by the voices talking excitedly, quickly reached the spot where were ten or a dozen Kafirs standing round the body of a fine old boar, which one of their number had just settled with a bullet. Poor old wretch! that bullet was a godsend to him, for he had just been most terribly mauled in a fight with a leopard. The tough skin hung literally in shreds from his neck and shoulders, presenting ghastly open wounds; the entrails protruded from a deep claw-gash in the side; and the head was an indistinguishable mass of blood and dirt, one eye hanging completely out of its socket. He had rolled down a few feet from the spot where he lay when the Kafir shot him, and where the plucky (?) dogs bayed him. The latter, however, had doubtless been worked up to a high pitch of excitement by the strong odour of leopard which still pervaded the place.

On searching around, we found unmistakable evidence of the life-and-death struggle which had taken place in that lonely kloof. The ground was covered in places with gouts of blood and yellow hair, to some of which the skin was still attached. Blood was splashed plentifully on the tree-stems and on the low brushwood, which for the space of a dozen yards round was trodden down flat. I fancy the leopard could only just have left when he heard the dogs entering the bush, for, judging by appearances, it seemed scarcely likely the poor old boar had beaten him off. Of course we took up the spoor at once, the large drops of blood upon the fallen leaves and moss-grown boulders making the task at first a light one. We followed it patiently for an hour with scarcely a check, fully expecting every moment to come upon the wounded leopard—for wounded he certainly was, and badly. The blood, however, was very dark-coloured, which made us fear he had not received a mortal hurt; still we kept at

it, until a violent thunderstorm, accompanied by torrents of rain, completely obliterated the spoor, and effectually checked us, just as we left the kloof and started over some open grass-land. It cooled the ardour of the none-too-willing natives also, to such an extent that though I offered a good reward to any one who would assist me to spoor the brute down, none would volunteer. However, I held on alone for another half-hour in the soaking rain, but at last had to confess myself beaten.

It is certain that the leopard did not have everything its own way that time—indeed it was quite possible he was so badly wounded as to be beyond the probability of eventual recovery; but at any rate there is little doubt that it would be many a long day before he tackled an old boar bush-pig again, even if he did not there and then register a vow to eschew fresh pork for the term of his natural life!

Living in a country positively infested with pigs, I have had ample opportunities for enjoying sport with them, and can safely say that out of the many I have killed or assisted at killing I have never yet known one show the white feather. Fierce, sullen determination seems innate in all of them: they cannot or will not realise the possibility of defeat, and hence the reason that they afford such good sport; and as the country one traverses in pursuit of them is always of a ruggedly beautiful nature, nothing further is required to emphasise the pleasure to be thus obtained.

To be really successful in securing a good day's sport, a thoroughly well-arranged hunting-party is indispensable, as the game, knowing every stone on the ridges, every bend in the creeks, and every narrow track in the kloofs, have great advantages in their favour. Still occasionally, if one is fairly lucky, and exercises due care and watchfulness, they may be met with and stalked in open ground and brought to bag without the assistance of beaters. A very unusual piece of good fortune fell to my lot one day, which is perhaps worth recounting. A hunting-party had been arranged, and the meet was to take place at some 'Mbaya kraals about twelve miles distant from my camp. I decided to ride over the previous evening, accompanied by Muntumuni, to a kraal distant some two and a half miles from the spot appointed for the meet, and to sleep

there, going on early next morning to the 'Mbaya kraals. Accordingly I started some boys off at noon with three of my dogs, and I followed about 4 P.M., with my blanket strapped to the saddle, and Muntumuni carrying some food. On the way over, we stopped to watch a reedbuck ewe climbing out of a hill 500 or 600 yards away, and, whilst looking in that direction, caught a glimpse of a small yellowish-looking object standing near a ridge of stones, about 400 yards distant, which we thought looked uncommonly like an oribi. Whilst watching it we were confirmed in our opinion by seeing it lie down; it had doubtless been watching us from the first. Instructing the boy to remain where he was and watch the buck, I rode quickly round below and came up behind the ridge of stones, making, as I believed, for a spot a little to one side of where the oribi lay. I crossed the ridge without putting anything up, then glanced towards the boy, who still knelt down and made no signal, as he would otherwise have done had the buck gone away, or had I been riding in the wrong direction. A few more paces and I saw an oribi ram lying low in the short grass, just beyond a large flat stone, which would have hidden it from view had I been on the ground; so, riding clear of the stone, I dismounted at barely 70 yards: the oribi slightly raised its head, and as it was in the act of jumping to its feet, I fired. The bullet struck up the dust from the very spot on which it had been lying. I fired again rather hurriedly, and saw the bullet strike the ground 50 yards in front of the oribi, though it sounded like a hit. As I fired the second shot, I noticed another oribi still lying perfectly quiet between two rocks 100 yards to my right. Immediately I turned towards him he sprang up, quickly followed by another. Two shots fired at them as they raced through the rocks missed; and they headed straight away for a small kopje covered with large boulders, and with other masses of rough stone strewn about on all sides. I could not get another shot, as the bucks disappeared in a hollow lying between me and the kopje; so, jumping into the saddle, I was soon in full pursuit; and as the oribi entered the rocks at the lower end, I made for the other, and, clambering up a steepish bank, raced through the stones and low sugar-bush at right angles to the course taken by the oribi. When nearly through

on the other side, and cantering easily along on the alert for the first sight of the game which I thought might possibly be standing in or near the kopje, I caught sight of one of them running from behind a clump of bush. I dismounted quickly, ran round a large boulder which obstructed the view, and saw the one oribi standing about 100 yards off and the other running up to join it. I fired at once at the standing one; it jumped away, evidently hard hit, then stood again, and, as I was about to give it another shot, fell dead. I let the other go, and slung the dead one—a ewe—on to my saddle, and rode slowly over to where I had left the boy. I saw him in the distance busy over something, and as I rode up nearer, to my surprise found he had a dead oribi—a fine ram—the one I first fired at, my second bullet having gone clean through him: he had run about 100 yards and lain down, and the boy, who had been watching, walked carefully up and found him dead. One often loses a buck in that way if the attention is taken off by another; and in any case a buck should be carefully watched for some distance, to make certain it is not hit.

A curious thing occasionally happens also in connection with small-game shooting; I have witnessed it particularly with vaal rhé buck and oribi. A buck jumps up and is fired at—apparently a hit; you follow at best pace, perhaps lose sight of the game in a hollow or behind a bush for an instant, then again sight it, as you think, running strongly, in fact harder than ever. Still keeping near about in its tracks, you come suddenly on a buck lying dead—your own, at which you first fired. Whether by chance or otherwise, it has run on top of an unwounded one and fallen dead, the other taking up the running. Watch as carefully as one may, it is quite impossible always to keep a buck in sight; so if you do not see the one drop, or do not happen to run over the spot where it fell, you stand a poor chance of getting either, for fear will lend wings to the unwounded one, and you give up the pursuit in disgust. I once fired at a vaal rhé buck standing in some cover 150 yards distant. I thought I hit, but as the smoke cleared, he apparently still stood there motionless, and watching me carefully. I fired again, heard the welcome “clop,” and saw that the buck was down, struggling in the cover. Riding up, I found

a ewe dead and a ram in his last throes. I had all the time believed that both shots were fired at the same buck.

The oribi was at one time very numerous on the higher mountain plateaux, and could be found in considerable numbers much lower down towards the flats. In the Low Country proper, between the foothills of the range and the sea-coast, they are never seen. They afford very pretty sport with a rifle, as they frequent open grass-lands, and usually give good clear shots at from 150 yards to 200 yards. They are, however, very difficult to knock over when bounding along at full speed through long grass, every now and again leaping high in the air, after the manner of springbuck. In taking these leaps the hind-legs come to the ground first. When wounded they go and lie down very quickly, and if watched carefully, can be easily walked up to and shot. In fact, at times they can be killed in this way with a smooth-bore, by marking the spot where they are lying down, and walking or riding in lessening circles round them until within range, then running in and shooting them as they jump up. I think, however, that the use of a smooth-bore on antelope, or any furred game larger than a hare, is quite unsportsmanlike. But this digression is taking us away from the pigs.

We carried the two buck (both sexes of the smaller antelopes are styled "bucks" in these parts; if desirous of distinguishing between them, the terms "ram" and "ewe" are used, and "bull" and "cow" for the larger antelopes, buffalo, giraffe, &c.) with us to the kraal where we were to sleep, much to the gratification of our host, who, like all natives, was very partial to fresh meat.

After seeing my horse cleaned down and fed, and having a good bath in the cool clear stream running close by the kraal, I joined the party round the fire. For a couple of hours or so we sat discussing the plans for the morrow and the latest kraal news, and then turned in for a night's rest.

It was scarcely light next morning when the boy brought me my coffee, and I arose at once and saddled up. The morning was particularly bleak and uninviting; objects at 50 yards were barely distinguishable, owing to a heavy mist, with passing showers of rain, which enshrouded everything. The outlook

was dreary in the extreme; but there was nothing to be gained by waiting, so leaving my dogs in charge of Muntumuni to be taken on by him, I set out alone for the 'Mbaya kraal, where the meet was to take place. This kraal was situated on a steep spur between two kloofs, the krantz above being high, and in places inaccessible. On the top of the krantz the ground was open table-land, stretching away with scarcely a break in its rolling smoothness as far as the base of the main range, and intersected by many small streams of delicious water. Two footpaths led to this kraal from the one at which we had slept,—the higher and longer of the two ascending the krantz by a gap at the back of the kraal, a good stiff climb to get out of; the other, which was considerably nearer, led down along a bush-fringed spruit at the foot of the krantz, and passing through two extensive kloofs, came out on the spur below the other kraal. On the chance of a shot at an oribi, however, I selected the upper path, and after half an hour's stiff climbing reached the summit of the krantz. Still all was dark and gloomy—

“The clouds above and the slanting rain”

had it all their own way. I set my pipe going, got into my wet saddle, and struck off along the footpath at a canter.

Before long the rain ceased, and the mist commenced to rise rapidly, curling and eddying around the face of the krantz, and still lying in heavy leaden masses over the uplands, but swiftly and mysteriously vanishing over the middle heights, its soft grey foam-clouds pierced here and there by bare spear-like pinnacles and bush-crowned buttresses. Drawing rein at the first muddy spruit—which opened out into a deep ravine running down through a gap in the krantz, and on the other side of which was another small gap in the rocks, down which a man on foot could scramble—I saw that my horse would have a difficulty in crossing, and was riding a few yards up stream to look for a less treacherous spot, when for an instant I fancied I saw a dark object moving along the ridge above me, across the gully. Momentary as the glance was, I felt confident that I was not mistaken, and as the wind was favourable, rode quickly up in that direction, scanning every yard of ground with the greatest care. “Umph, umph, umph!” “Hullo! what the mischief's

that? Woa, boy, steady—steady, now!” “Umph, umph, umph!” “Pigs, by all that’s lucky! No mistaking that!”

Slipping quickly from the saddle, I seized the opportunity to take up another hole in the girths, and then cocking my rifle, silently waited. Presently, “Umph, umph, umph!” came the angelic notes exactly in front of me, and the next instant, out of the mist, a sounder of nine pigs, all of them full grown, came into view, diligently making their way towards the banks of the stream which lay between us. Nearer they came, till barely fifty yards separated us. A fine old fellow, mottled brown and white in colour, was leading, slightly to my right; and taking fair aim at the point of his shoulder, as he stopped an instant and turned half broadside on to examine some particularly succulent root, I touched the trigger. He fell as if struck by lightning, and then, hey! what a commotion! None knew the direction from which the shot came, nor did they appear to realise that one of their number was down; some ran one way, some another, and then, to my surprise, I noticed a splendid old boar with clean white tusks come quietly trotting over the low ridge to join those that had come up stream, while one ran straight over to the water, and with ears cocked stood on the bank listening most attentively. Another shot, and he also fell stone-dead, with a bullet in the nape of the neck. Catching my horse, I jumped into the saddle and galloped up stream, to try and cut off the big boar, who was trotting quickly along in that direction. Riding along the bank, here covered with thick bracken, I had covered about 200 yards, when I heard a rush below me, under the bank, and at once saw the old boar and another pig climb out of the opposite side and disappear in some heavy cover. It did not occupy me many seconds to jump down and cock my rifle, and I had the satisfaction of seeing the bushes on the other side wave slightly, as a pig walked cautiously to the edge. As he moved forward I saw his black neck for an instant, then he trotted boldly out into the open, to receive a bullet between the shoulder-blades, which dropped him, kicking.

Mounting again, I crossed through the creek above, and rode a little way down to the cover in which I still believed the old boar to be hidden. I did not care to ride inside, as I should have been unable to use my rifle at such close quarters; and if

he broke cover and ran into the creek, he could get away down it and out of sight, and make his way over the krantz; so I halted an instant on the outer edge and shouted. Without more ado the old fellow came straight out at the horse's legs, grunting viciously. I fired a snap-shot from the saddle, and wheeled my nag round just in time to avoid the rush, as the boar turned at an angle and made off down the creek.

A touch of the spur, and my good horse sprang forward,—taking the water at a leap,—and clambered up the other bank. Here I saw two pigs—the old boar and another that had joined him from somewhere—pegging along in front of me about 150 yards distant. I knew at once they were making for the gap in the krantz, through which I had climbed up, and I set myself to stop their little game. It was splendid going, as the grass was short, and there was not a hole about. I lost some ground by edging off to the right in my endeavour to get below them and force them along the higher ridge, but made up for lost time at the third little creek, where the smaller pig scrambled down the bank and up the other side; the old boar took it at a flying leap. I very fortunately hit off a fine spot, about 5 feet across; then using my spurs I came up on them slowly but surely. When close to their sterns, I pulled in and dismounted, but, unsteady from the run, missed. By the time I had another cartridge in, I could only see the smaller of the two, the big boar having disappeared in a slight depression of the ground to my right front. A lucky shot tumbled the one over, and I was again in the saddle. Cantering smartly along, and now edging off towards the krantz, I again caught sight of the boar running across my front. He was a splendid specimen, and I longed to bag him. Barely 50 yards separated him from the gap in the krantz where he felt his safety assured; so I pulled in at once, and jumping down, fired. A clean miss! Confound it, how annoyed I felt! In another instant the boar jumped down into a little “blind” creek, quickly gained the shelter of some low scrub, through which he ran to a spot at which he could descend the krantz, and there vanished. I galloped to the edge, and then left my horse: there just remained the chance that the boar would leave the narrow strip of bush below the krantz, and, skirting its base, make for an extensive patch of bush close to the ridge on which stood the 'Mbaya

kraal. Had he kept straight away down the kloof I should never have seen him again, but my star was in the ascendant that day, for in a few minutes I saw him trot cautiously almost directly under me and about 150 yards distant. I lay on steadily and fired. He stumbled, but recovered himself, and dived back into the kloof. I now scrambled down through the bush, and very soon found the blood-spoor. The boar had gone off, keeping to the water all the way, making down stream; and blood was splashed plentifully on all the boulders amongst which he had passed. Another 100 yards and I heard a movement in the bush to my left front, and at once caught sight of the boar lying on the bank and looking very sick. Oh for an assegai then to go in and give him his quietus! But I had none, so I was forced to give him another shot. I had secured a real prize, for he was a particularly large boar, with a fine pair of tusks 4 inches outside the jaws. It took me some time to scramble out of the kloof which I had so easily descended, and when I reached my horse I heard sounds below the krantz, between it and the kraal, which led me to think that the hunting-party was possibly on the move without me; so I rode over quickly, and in twenty minutes reached the kraal, only to find, as I surmised, that the party had already set out. It appears some of the boys saw four pigs coming down through a small gap in the krantz from the plateau above, and making for the large bush below, and guessed rightly, on hearing my shot, that they had run from me. I off-saddled and knee-halted my horse, and hurried down on foot to where the boys had surrounded the bush. A party of them had entered the upper end of the kloof to try and drive the pigs down, but these had scattered and broken back in detail, only one being killed, a large sow, which two of the boys had assegaied in a clump of thorny bush. One of them ran out past me about 160 yards away, but I missed it; also a good chance at a large bushbuck ram, which ran through some very thick cover along the edge of the kloof. To get a better view and perhaps another shot at this ram I climbed into a small *'mngcosi*-tree, standing some 50 yards distant; and as I was in the act of drawing myself up to a convenient branch, having my rifle in my left hand, another large bushbuck ram, with one horn broken short off, jumped up from its "seat," not 10 feet from the foot of the tree. I scrambled into

some sort of position and fired a snap-shot at him, but without effect. In the afternoon we made an unsuccessful search in the bush on the other side of the kraal. There is little doubt that the pigs I so luckily came across in the early morning were the same lot for which the hunting-party had been called out, so I had the best of the fun that day.

It requires cool judgment and a quick eye to kill an old pig on foot with an assegai alone. I have succeeded in doing so on several occasions, and can well remember how on one of them I nearly caught a Tartar. Having turned out some boys to take the spoor of half-a-dozen pigs which had got into their mealies during the night, we lost a good chance of catching them while feeding along in the open, owing to the boys being so late at muster. However, once started, we followed them steadily, till at last the spoor led into a long narrow strip of bush along the banks of a winding creek. By carefully examining the lower end of the bush we ascertained that they had not gone out, so made our arrangements accordingly. The opposite side of the creek was comparatively open, but the ground very rough and stony, and ascending by a steep gradient to a high rocky ridge, on the other side of which was a dense kloof; while another smaller one intersected the slope and joined the creek nearly abreast of where the bush—into which we had spooed the pigs—came to an abrupt termination. Clearly the spot where this connection took place was the best stand of all, so I proceeded thither with a little Kafir lad on whom rested the responsibility of carrying my rifle at such times as I required to use an assegai. I first placed the boys carefully, instructing a party of fifteen or twenty to remain where they were until the others had taken up their positions, and then to advance on the spoor. Two boys were then sent away to each of the smaller kloofs on either side of the ridge, while two were stationed at the far end of the bush, opposite to me. On reaching my post, I found that the scrub at the lower end of the kloof debouching from the rocky ridge above was very thick, and the ground uncommonly swampy everywhere; and there seemed little doubt but that the pigs would try and escape that way. In a short time the shouts of the advancing beaters as they entered the bush sounded clearly; a very few minutes elapsed, and then the kloof rang with louder

cries, and the incessant, fierce barking of the dogs announced that some luckless pig was at bay. To any one accustomed to it, it is very easy to picture in imagination everything that is taking place upon such occasions, even though the scenes be enacted many hundred yards away, and in the depths of a dark kloof. You can see the grim silent boar at bay in the thorn thicket, champing his foam-flecked jaws—can see, as a loud yell sounds through the kloof, the luckless hound sprawling bleeding amongst the thorns—the deep barking of the pack increases, you know one or two Kafirs are appearing on the scene, their loud cries and muttered ejaculations increasing as they drive their weapons home—each renewed burst of shouting tells of another come to join in the fray, till at last the barking and shouting give place to a babel of voices as the hunters stand over and examine their prostrate foe.

One of the watchers on the hill opposite to me left his post to join in the fun, but I still stood keenly expectant. Another half-hour passed; the boys had again taken up the beating, when a shot was fired in one of the small side kloofs. I stepped a few paces back and stood on a little ant-hill, in order to see better what was going on, when the youngster pointed excitedly to the opposite side of the creek, where I saw a movement amongst the bushes about fifty yards distant, and a black head appeared for an instant in a little open spot; then with a rush two pigs came tearing along, under, over, and through all obstacles, keen only to leave the shouting, barking crowd behind them. The range was short, and I fired at once, and, to my satisfaction, heard a struggling form tumble over the low bank into the thick bush below, and lie there kicking. Giving the rifle to the boy, I rushed into the gully, to cross over and finish the wounded animal off with my assegai, as I saw two other boys running down the opposite slope towards me. Just in front of my position was a thin strip of scrub and thorny bush, with reeds and long grass growing close up to it. I was on the point of entering this, and halted for an instant to see the best way through, when I noticed the head and ears of a great boar peering at me through the leaves; he was within 12 feet of me, and, without any warning, charged out. I jumped aside, though I scarcely know how, tearing my back and legs with the brambles, for I

was in light marching order that day, a flannel shirt and a towel tied round my waist completing my costume, if I except a felt hat and pair of boots. As the boar passed me, champing his jaws viciously, I drove the great 20-inch-bladed assegai with all my force down into his back. He lurched to one side, and with a savage wrench dragged the weapon out of my hands. In avoiding his rush I tripped and fell; the next instant the boar, either catching sight of the little "nipper" on the ant-heap, or fearful of trying the open ground in his wounded state, wheeled round, and charged back on top of me. I do not think he then had any specially evil designs upon myself; but, as when a Malay runs "amuck," all and everything must "look out" that is in his way. Fortunately he did not even scratch me, and weakened by his wound, and impeded in his movements by the still hanging assegai, he quickly came to a stand on the edge of the reeds. Scrambling out of my undignified position as speedily as I could, I shouted for the boys to come and help, and seizing a light assegai from the lad, again ran in, only to be charged a second time by the fierce brute. The useless weapon broke off in his shoulder, and I had no easy task to escape his tusks, tearing the back out of my shirt in doing so. Fortunately the boys now came up, and getting an assegai from one of them, we ran in together. The boar stood in a very strong position, a steep bank rising behind him, and on his right a muddy swamp, so that he could only be approached from his left and front. He was a big, heavy brute too, and would have stood up against one man for a long time. Three of us were too many for him, however, and, being outflanked, he soon had to give in, though not until he had bitten two of the assegai-shafts in halves, and given other evidence of what he could have done with a man's legs if he had the chance. I was in tatters after the scuffle, both as regards my clothes and flesh; but in the moment of victory one thinks very lightly of such matters.

We found the pig I first knocked over quite dead, and the boys had also killed a good boar, which was the first started by the beaters. The dogs having brought him to bay, they ran in and assegaied him.

On another occasion I left my place during the month of February with a Scotch cart and oxen, and accompanied by a



“As the boar passed me, I drove the assegai with all my force down into his back.”

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TILDEN FOUNDATIONS

few boys, to try and get a shot at some sable antelope or koodoo on the flats around the base of the Rij Kopjes, which is the name given to a long line of kopjes stretching away out into the Low Country from one of the main spurs on the eastern slope of the Kahlamba range. As a rule, hunting in the Low Country at this time of year, even though close up to the foothills, is very unsatisfactory, and productive only of fever and disappointment. It is very difficult to see game at all, harder to hit them, and harder still to recover them if wounded, as the vegetation grows so rapidly after the first rainfall, that by February the grass reaches a height of from 6 feet to 8 feet, and an ordinary ox is invisible at a distance of a dozen yards. Of course in places the grass is shorter, though never less than 5 feet, which is higher than the back of the biggest sable. After rain, which occurs almost daily in the summer, or when heavy dew has fallen, it can easily be imagined that tramping ten or twelve miles through such grass is anything but pleasant work. We camped the first night at the Riet Spruit, and strolling down the bank with my rifle in the evening, I had the good fortune to knock over a steinbuck ram. In the early mornings and evenings these little buck are very easily circumvented, as they will stand and stare a long time before they run off, and even when once started will frequently stop again on hearing a sharp whistle. When running, however, they are a difficult mark for a rifle.

That night quite a numerous party assembled round our camp fire, as, in addition to my own boys, a large gang of Kafirs, who were going away to a distant kraal "ku tshis' upondo" ("to burn the horn"—an ordeal by which they believe they can discover a criminal, or one who has in any way injured another; though whether the one thus declared by witchcraft to be criminal considers the operation infallible is, I think, open to question!), had joined the party just before we outspanned, and, with a dirty night in prospect, asked permission to remain and sleep at our camp. When we had outspanned, a number of women and girls came up who had been down on the flats searching for the nauseous fruit known as *'timbuli*, which is eagerly eaten by the natives in the spring and summer, before the crops ripen. Koodoo, bushbuck, duiker, 'insumbi, and pigs, are all very partial to this fruit. It was too late in the evening for these women to return

home, so they also made camp near by, and joined our party, to the very evident delight of the "mashers" amongst them. Towards evening the sky grew lurid, the stifling sultriness of the late afternoon was relieved by occasional damp cool gusts of wind, which stirred the tree-tops mournfully; pile upon pile of heavy threatening storm-clouds rolled along and banked up in the south-east, then, spreading out in swift advance, covered the whole heavens with their dark masses; ever from out the blackest of them shot the lightning's forked tongues, blue and lurid, till it seemed as if we were gazing on the fiery heart of the storm itself; whilst muttering thunder over the distant Sabi river sounded like far-off and incessant artillery-fire. About 8 P.M. the lightning became intensely vivid, and in its ghastly glare every pinnacle, every rocky gorge and boulder-pile on the Rij Kopjes, which otherwise were shrouded in deep darkness, stood out in clear relief; peal upon peal of thunder rolled and crashed around; the frightened cattle huddled together under the trees, and the dogs crept whining under the cart. Some rough shelters had been thrown up, but our party still laughed and chatted around the fire. And now the wind comes sweeping along in fiercer, colder blasts, bending and swaying the trees, and causing the long dry yellow spear-grass to wave and rustle like fields of ripe grain. Still more lurid grows the sky, more deeply oppressive the pauses between the gusts. Then comes a longer lull, the wind drops, and all nature awaits in silence the war of elements which is now imminent. Looking back towards the Rij Kopjes, we see the great wall of storm advancing, swiftly and with a loud booming sound.

No cessation now of either thunder or lightning; the whole air is heavily charged with electricity; once again comes the wind, and great splashes of rain fall, thicker and faster; then the murky gloom around is lit up with a blue glare of terrible intensity, that causes stars to dance before the eyes for some seconds after; a mighty crash seems to rend the heavens, and the night storm is upon us in all its wild fury. A general stampede for shelter takes place; in three minutes every hissing spluttering fire is out, torrents of rain pour down upon us, miniature rivers rush under and around us through every little hollow and gutter in the ground; the bending trees creak and

moan. On all sides the flashing chain-lightning girds the sky around as with an electric belt; hissing tongues of forked fire dart through the blackness, scathing and withering where they touch; one fearful flash—followed by a report so deafening that the very chain trek-touw of the cart rattles audibly—strikes on the edge of a little belt of trees to our right, and the crashing rending sound that follows tells its own tale of destruction, sudden and complete.

As crash follows crash, the huge volume of sound reverberates amongst the echoing mountains, and the earth hears and trembles. The creek below us, half an hour ago containing a clear dancing stream a few inches deep, now roars and thunders past us, a yellow turbid flood, bearing stones and *débris* away in its wild onward rush. But the worst of it is soon over; it wears itself out by the very fierceness of its fury, though its effect will be evident in the morning. The rain slackens, clear spots appear in the sky, the lightning plays incessantly, but the thunder sounds more distant, and rolls away in the north-west with discontented mutterings. Any attempt to keep dry throughout the storm was futile. Crouched under a leaky cart-sail, I could only do my best to protect my weapons, an inch or two more water over and under me being a mere matter of detail, and not worth taking into consideration.

The following morning broke wet and miserable. Nature in tears is very necessary, and perhaps poetical, but it is not always pleasant. However, I took my rifle, and a walk round the other side of the kopjes. One of the boys shot a duiker, and I came across an enormous rock-python which had swallowed a young reedbuck ram, horns and all. I was crawling through a steep gully, followed by one of my boys—it was so dense inside we were proceeding on hands and knees—when suddenly this great mass confronted me. I fired into it at once, when it uncoiled and commenced the most horrible operation of ridding itself of the disgusting load within it. The head appeared first, until by a series of violent contortions the whole putrid mass was vomited forth; and never shall I forget that disgusting sight. In the meantime, Muntumuni had run in and attempted to stab the creature through the head, but the assegai passed through the cheek and into the ground, and the boy was unable to with-

draw it. The struggles of the great reptile were awful: it got its tail round a clump of bush, and in a very few minutes had cleared a wide area of scrub in front of it, the assegai, which it had torn from the ground, still remaining hanging fast in its cheek. My bullet had struck it about in the middle without breaking the spine, and great lumps of white fat were protruding from the wound. The stench was overpowering, as the hind-quarters of the reedbuck were quite decomposed and partially digested, so we were anxious to kill the thing and clear out as soon as possible. I did not care about firing another shot, in case game should be near at hand, so I took an assegai, and at considerable risk of being encircled in the writhing folds, watched my opportunity and drove it through the brute's neck. I could not recover the weapon, which remained fast in the neck, but the reptile easily withdrew it from the ground, and continued his contortions apparently little the worse for the two assegais hanging to it, which it lashed about like flails. Fortunately help arrived: another boy, hearing my shot, had come up, guided to the spot by the sounds of the encounter. Together we managed to club it with huge logs of wood till it appeared dead, and as I wished to keep the skin, I instructed the two boys to drag the carcass back to camp.

I continued my walk alone, and once nearly came up with a troop of sable antelope, but could not get a shot, though I followed them a long way. Returning towards the cart, however, five sable ran out of a thick grove of trees, and having neither seen nor winded me, ran round the bush, and passed me broadside at 100 yards. Selecting the only large bull with them, I fired and broke his front leg. In the long grass I could not get another shot, so followed at my best pace. He soon turned out, however, and stood behind a clump of trees, and I very nearly missed seeing him, as I was running on the spoor. A loud snort arrested my attention, and turning—for I had passed by him—saw him just making off. This time I dropped him with a bullet *schuins* (diagonally) through him. He was a good bull, carrying 40-inch horns, which were, however, very much broken and split. On reaching camp, after covering up the bull, I found the boys only just starting to skin the python, and they informed me that as they were dragging it along close to the

cart it commenced to writhe about, and they promptly let go. It then laid hold of a tree and coiled around it, and another hour passed before they finally extinguished it, even with help from the camp. It was the largest python I have ever killed, measuring 19 feet 2 inches. I would be afraid to say how many quarts of fat we got from it, but I know it was a surprisingly large quantity. It is an excellent lubricant for firearms, and never clogs on a gun.

It rained hard the following day, and I took the field again in a shirt and pair of boots, but though I walked for six hours, failed to bag anything. I missed an easy shot at a reedbuck, and saw five fine koodoo bulls together, but they gave me no chance, as they got away amongst the kopjes, where I did not care to follow them. As it seemed useless to hunt in such weather, I instructed the driver to span-in and trek back to the Reit Spruit, where we slept the first night; but as we were on the point of starting, a strange Kafir turned up who had been through to a neighbouring kraal, and on his return towards his home had seen and marked down a troop of pigs into a bush on the south side of the line of kopjes. I proceeded at once with all the spare boys to try and turn them out. It was a very awkward bush in which to get at them, and they certainly had every chance in their favour, but luck was on our side. Thinking they would probably try and break cover at the spot at which they had entered, I got the boy to point this place out to me, and sent the beaters away to the far end of the bush. I thought they were never going to turn those brutes out—in fact, at one time I fancied the pigs had not stopped in the bush at all, but gone out over the kopjes, amongst the stones of which we could easily have missed the spoor. We succeeded, however, in killing two boars and a lusty old sow, the latter being held by Rover, the very best hound I ever possessed for dangerous game. He got very badly cut on the leg in the struggle.

After cutting up and dividing the meat amongst the boys (who are very partial to it, though many will not eat that of the domestic pig), we struck off along a Kafir footpath towards the cart, and I was walking ahead, not sorry to be on the way towards a cup of coffee, for I was feeling tired and a good deal knocked about. One other piece of luck, however, was in store for me,

for we had scarcely proceeded 200 yards from the spot where so much shouting and firing had taken place, when, to my astonishment, I saw three fine koodoo cows cantering leisurely along, heading straight for the kopje. They saw us distinctly, but did not appear to hurry themselves at all, hopping very unconcernedly over the footpath at less than 100 yards' distance. Their sex was sacred, and we stood watching them admiringly, though the boys would certainly have preferred seeing my rifle go up. Just as we were moving on again I heard "Buka, baas, nans inkunzi!" ("Look, sir, there's a bull!"), and turning quickly, saw a fine old blue bull standing under a clump of trees about 150 yards off. He had seen us, and was probably afraid to cross the path so close to us, thinking to wait till we passed, and then rejoin his harem. But he was fated never again to see them, for just as he moved quietly forward my rifle was up, an instant's pause, and before the smoke was clear of the muzzle the old bull lay kicking his last. This koodoo carried a very wide-set pair of horns, 53 inches over the curve, the tips being peculiarly turned backwards like hooks. We had to leave him and take the meat of the pigs on to the cart; but next morning, before inspanning, the boys went over, cut him up, and carried him in, whilst I walked on ahead towards home, having had quite enough rain during the trip to last for some time.

CHAPTER IV.

BUSH-PIG HUNTING (*continued*).

Swazis in the hunting-veldt—Good training for war-time—Blue blood—Marriage laws—Gin and brandy as civilising influences—Misplaced trust—'Mgiyo's again—An uninviting morning—Rover to the fore—A panorama—Baboons—Spoorers at work—Against the rules—Thorns—In the pig-run—"Hlanganisani!"—Opening the ball—Now for the assegai!—A complication—Four dogs wounded—A bush-buck ewe—The old boar—Dog killed—Discovered—A hard tussle—Tiffin—A general favourite—An enchanting spot—Incongruous surroundings—'Mqedsa's feat—Homeward—"Ba bomvu"—A hunting chorus—The dusky fair—Night scene—Musical performance—The day's bag—Early morning—News of a pig-raid—Love-making under difficulties—The meet—In blissful ignorance—Two squeakers sacrificed—The troop escapes—Unexpected assistance—In the reeds—Spread-eagled—Hand to hand—A new acquisition—An enormous boar—Weighing him piecemeal.

"WE, Makatu! ku menywa 'nqina ngom'so, nga'le—'Mpatsa."
 ("A hunting-party has been called for to-morrow, over there at the 'Mpatsa kraal.") I was returning to camp from an afternoon's ride, accompanied by my dogs, having been searching unsuccessfully for a buck for the larder, when I met the bearer of this welcome piece of news, a tall, lithe, active Swazi, as well known for his prowess on the warpath as in the hunting-veldt. After chatting for a few minutes we separated, and I rode back direct to my camp to get things ready for the morrow's sport. There is no more keen enthusiast in the hunting-veldt than your thoroughbred Swazi. There they acquire those powers of endurance and of ready resource in difficulties, and find ample scope for the exhibition of that inborn valour which so distinguishes them in war-time. And there is no tribe that I have

ever been amongst that can plan and carry out the plan of a hunt better than the Swazis, for they are past-masters in the use of their weapons, and in everything pertaining to forest-craft. If a hunting-party is arranged by them, they can be depended upon to do everything thoroughly, and if success does not follow, it will be through no fault of theirs. It cannot be wondered at, indeed, that they are such a superior race. Sprung from the best blood of Zululand, and dwelling in the exhilarating air of a mountainous country, they are bound by very strict laws regarding marriage, whereby a man can seldom take a wife until he has attained full manhood; the girl of his choice, in the same way, being equally well fitted to become the mother of hardy healthy children. I have been amongst them a great deal, and can feelingly say that though they have their faults—as who has not?—they are a brave and deserving people, punctiliously honest, and staunch companions in the field. Of course I need scarcely say I refer to the Swazi as he was before our boasted civilising influences got at him, and made him a slave to the gin and brandy bottle. Cruel he was, granted; but he was a savage, so we can scarcely wonder at that. But that their men were brave and daring, and their women virtuous, cannot be denied. And they have ever been the friends of the English, and put boundless trust in English faith and honesty of purpose; and yet these are the people whom our Government would hand over to their hereditary enemies—not, be it borne in mind, in an open candid manner, as would be done had we the courage of our opinions, but in a shuffling, vacillating way, and under the cloak of formal conferences. The unanimous voice of public opinion prevented the accomplishment of this faithless act a few years ago, but now *tempora mutantur*, and Swaziland must go.

Night is fast closing around us; the tireless feet of the energetic dancers no longer tread the well-worn space between the hut-circle and the cattle-kraal; the young moon has long since disappeared behind yonder darkly outlined ridge, the great horned owl glides on noiseless pinions over the kraal, hooting its surprise at the presence of our little group at such a time of night; and at last we, who had been discussing the chances of sport on the following day, accepted its suggestion and retired to rest.

“Baas, bati baya hamba manje!” (“Sir, they say they’re off

now!") I was pulling on my togs as quickly as possible within the circumscribed limits of a Kafir hut, but was evidently behind-hand, and 'Mqedsa, a son of my Swazi host, had poked his woolly head in at the low doorway and strove to hurry me up by the above salutation. It had been arranged that the hunting-party should follow up a large sounder of pigs which for some nights past had been raiding in 'Mgiyo's mealie-gardens, and my morning coffee had accordingly been brought in at a particularly early hour, in fact while it was still quite dark. But

"Morning arose, stormy and pale,
No sun, but a wannish glare
In fold upon fold of hueless cloud,
And the budded peaks of the wood are bow'd,
Caught and cuffed by the gale;
I had fancied it would be fair."

Hence I was somewhat slack about turning out of the warm blankets, but the call effectually dispelled all ideas of lying down again, and in a few minutes' time I was ready to start. Calling Rover up from the mat where he lay enjoying a very lively matutinal flea-hunt, I quickly followed my young guide, who, with his shield and bundle of assegais, started off at a sharp pace along the track leading down to 'Mgiyo's kraal. Passing through the head kraal, where we were met with many kindly salutations from the women-folk, who even at this early hour were up and about, we followed the footpath down a long ridge, at the bottom of which we had to cross a wide vlei or marsh, where we found the cover very dense; and as it was a soaking wet morning, we were very soon wet through from the showers which fell from the grass-tops and bushes. This was always a good vlei for reed-buck, and to maintain its reputation it produced one that day; for as we were nearly across it, a shot to our right attracted our attention, and we saw a well-grown ram break out of the long cover, and run leisurely up the slope in front of us. He was scarcely 120 yards distant, and as I touched the trigger a loud "clop" answered the shot, and the stricken buck not having seen us, but running from the party higher up the vlei, dashed down hill again, crossing barely 20 yards in front of us. "Sah! sah! sah! Rover, sah!" No need, however, to "sah on" the old dog, for he knew his work as well as any one that took the field that

day; and a few minutes later a scuffle and a cry proclaimed the buck ours. Some twelve or fourteen men of the 'Mshatsa kraal came running up: they it was who had come upon the buck feeding, fired at it, and started it off in our direction.

A good beginning to what proved a most successful day; and after handing over Rover's perquisites, we covered the carcass up, and hurried along towards the scene of our day's sport, passing through 'Mgiyo's kraals and picking up small detachments of boys on the way. The appointed rendezvous was still some four miles distant, and before we reached it the rain had ceased, and the sun was doing its level best to pierce through the dense curtain of mist which hung around; and though the morning was still raw, it gave promise of becoming a "scorcher" before mid-day. The country we intended to hunt over was very rough, being broken up into numerous deep kloofs and gorges, all of them well wooded, while the dividing ridges were covered with huge granite boulders and outcropping quartz reefs—invisible, however, for the most part, amongst the summer growth of long tangled grass and scrub, which made walking anything but easy. It had been arranged that the whole party should meet on the summit of a lone hill, on one side of which a steep krantz overlooked a long bushy kloof 100 feet below. On the north side there was a very steep and difficult approach, over and amongst piled-up boulders—a regular *baviaan-pad* (baboons' path)—and up the face of a wet, slippery rock, on which it was most difficult to find a foothold. But we gained the summit eventually, and had a fine view over the extensive wooded kloofs that furrowed the eastern and western sides of the hill,—that to the east, some three miles in length, running up against the foothills of the main range, along whose scarred and rugged face the sun, momentarily growing more powerful and brilliant, disclosed many a glittering cascade and water-worn krantz, while from the topmost pinnacle of a rocky ridge bordering the kloof, and crowned with an old withered tree, strangely stunted and contorted in its growth, boomed forth the hoarse bark of a sentry baboon, a cry which brought up the remainder of the troop—twenty or thirty in number, old and young—from a small bush below scarlet with ripe *'manombela*. Helter-skelter up they raced in terrible earnest, each afraid of being the last to reach a place of safety, but which,

once reached, appeared to render them valorous enough, judging by the riotous chorus of barks and yells which echoed through the hills, pitched in every key, from the deep bass boom of the old sentry *mannetje* to the shrill treble of the smallest imp amongst them.

The kloof on the western slope of the hill was about two miles in length, wide, steep, and rugged at its upper end, where it fell off from the hill, but narrower and less dense lower down, where it seemed to lose its individuality in a succession of bush-fringed vleis overgrown with a matted jungle of long flowering weeds and creepers—grand cover for the game we sought. Scouts from the head kraal had been out ever since earliest dawn, examining the spoor, and taking note of everything connected with the movements of the game that could in any way further the success of the operations.

Ere we reached the hill one party of fifteen or twenty boys had struck off down the eastern kloof on the very fresh spoor of a lot of pigs which had separated from the main troop,—the other spoorers, fourteen or fifteen in number, having held on after a large boar and his following of over a dozen full-grown pigs, besides juveniles. These had skirted the foot of the hill, and scattered about down the ridge on the eastern side, feeding along quietly; and we now only awaited news from these spoorers to say that the pigs were duly marked down into some kloof. No one having returned from either party by the time we gained the summit of the hill, we seated ourselves about to await the word to advance. Young and old, we mustered on the hill sixty-three: there were probably another thirty boys away.

As we sat there smoking or snuffing, according to our various creeds, the last fleecy shreds of mist curled away, unable any longer to withstand the sun's determined attack; but away in the south-east we could see the dense white cloud-caps hanging over Legokoti, Manungu, the weird "Ship Mountain," and the serried peaks of Swaziland. At last a shot fired down in the eastern kloof, and the distant sound of shouting and barking, caused a movement amongst our party, and seizing their shields and assegais, a detachment of twenty boys quickly started off in that direction, whilst the remainder of us held on as we were. Very shortly afterwards distant shouts were heard away down

the western kloof, and as we stood perched upon all the commanding spots we could find, I swept the lower ground with my field-glasses, and soon made out two young lads hurrying breathlessly up to us. Silently they slipped into our midst, and reported that they had marked the pigs down into the reeds at the lower end of the kloof, and that the large boar was amongst them. All necessary arrangements had been made in the event of the pigs being in this kloof; so without any needless chattering and discussion, such as would have taken place amongst other natives, our party divided, and each member set off towards the post which had been allotted to him. So complete were the arrangements that escape for the pigs, except by breaking back, seemed impossible.

All the dogs, with the exception of Rover, were taken on by the gang told off to supplement the spoorers who were going into the bush on the track of the pigs, while I had decided to take my stand in one or other of the many pig-runs which intersected the kloof in all directions. As we all moved off a klipspringer ram jumped up from amongst the rocks below, and, standing irresolutely for a second on a prominent pinnacle, afforded such a tempting shot that one of the boys fired at him, although firing under such circumstances was against the rules. The buck jumped away, but again stood at 150 yards; so believing the mischief was done when the first shot was fired, I put in a second, and dropped him. It proved, however, to be the boy's buck, as on examination we found his bullet had passed through the fleshy part of the thigh and drawn first blood. This buck's horns, though of only average length, were strangely set on its head, the one standing almost straight out from the frontals like that of the fabled unicorn, the other sloping backwards at a greater angle than those of a duiker: the tips were 6 inches apart.

As silently and expeditiously as the rough nature of the ground would allow, we descended the hillside until we neared the bush, where our small party—consisting of a few elders of the people armed with guns, and myself and boy—broke up, each taking his own course. 'Mqedsa accompanied me and led Rover in leash, ready to slip when occasion required. Very slowly we proceeded after entering the bush, at one time wriggling along

snake-fashion under a trellis-work of thorns; at another worming ourselves in between two trees, whose thorn-protected stems were barely 18 inches apart, exercise at which my lithe young companion had a great pull over 5 feet 10½ and 41 inches round the chest. Pleasant going indeed!—now hooked up by one or other ear in a grapple-creeper, now trying to back out of some dense tangle, in doing which a particularly long and sharp-pointed thorn penetrates a more than usually tender spot upon the body which is not the head; and so on, “between Scylla and Charybdis” the whole way, the only part of the performance which I see to admire being the stoical gravity with which my almost naked guide accepts the situation, and—let me whisper it—even finds time and opportunity to relax into a grin at my discomfort. Truly the wooded kloofs of this country need to be known to be fully appreciated: for thorny tangle and generally aggressive impenetrability they must be hard to beat.

Fresh spoor of pig, bushbuck, 'msumbi, and smaller fry was everywhere visible as we passed through the bush, and Rover's excitement became intense as we entered the first large “run,” along which it was evident some pigs had passed within a few hours. We were near the bottom of the kloof, as we could distinctly hear the water tumbling over the stones and boulders below us, distant perhaps some 30 yards. I would have examined the bush below had there been time, as it seemed likely there would be another and more frequented run lower down on the edge of the thick scrub which lined the banks; and this afterwards proved to be the case, the ground being also more open and better adapted to rifle-shooting. But the opening notes at the far end of the kloof, and the distant murmur of voices, warned us to observe strict silence and remain where we were, otherwise no pig would we see that day. Crouching low, a few paces above the run, with 'Mqedsa on my right hand, I carefully examined the bush in front, whilst both of us listened intently for the first sounds that should denote the approach of our game. Once an indistinctly outlined form glided with ghostly silence into the run a dozen yards away, and next moment I saw the stalwart form and gleaming eyes of Loyiwa, one of the keenest and most daring of the party, as he stepped a pace forward, then, catching sight of us, pointed significantly to the ground, and stole

away into the bush in the same wonderfully stealthy manner in which he had approached. At last a wild yell, mingled with the frantic barking of dogs and cries of "Hlanganisani!" ("Surround!"), set the ball rolling, and the welcome "Enhla, enhla!" told us the game was afoot, and coming in our direction. 'Mqedsa had all his work cut out for him to hold Rover, who strained and tugged at the leash in his frantic efforts to escape and join the fun, as the now plainly audible rush of pigs and dogs caused me to grasp my rifle more firmly and peer deeper into the gloomy thicket for the first sight of the game. Finger on trigger, I waited silently. Now the chase is just in front of me—surely I must get a shot in now! Nearer and nearer, till at last I could swear I saw the bushes moving about a dozen yards down the run, near the spot where Loyiwa had crossed; but no! almost before I can realise my mistake, the crashing bushes and fierce grunting of the pigs warned me that they had taken the lower run. Snatching up my assegai, and telling 'Mqedsa to slip the dog, I sprang forward, and, regardless then of thorns or any other obstacles, gained the lower path just in time to see two full-grown pigs footing it at racing pace through the bush, and four or five dogs hanging round the last one. I got a quick snap-shot at the leader, which staggered her, and, together with 'Mqedsa, ran forward. Lying in the path was the yellow body of poor little 'Madhlatshani, bleeding profusely from an ugly gash in the fore-shoulder. A little beyond lay my pig on her side dead, and yet another 50 yards up the bush the dogs had at last brought the other one—a boar—to a stand, Rover's arrival on the scene of action having turned the balance in favour of the dogs. We pressed on breathlessly, but it was too late, for even as we came in sight of the combatants, three gleaming assegais were plunged between the boar's shoulder-blades: he lurched forward, made a desperate upward lunge at his nearest foe, and sank to the ground dead.

The occasional shots and renewed cries of men and dogs leave us but little time for mutual congratulations; and Rover, keenly alive to the situation, looks up at me and says plainly enough, "Come on, master—don't stand fooling there!" I gave the wounded dog in charge of one of the boys, and again posted myself, this time in the lower run, telling 'Mqedsa to stand in

the old spot. Scarcely was I in position when I heard pigs advancing, and a boar and sow came trotting leisurely along, stopping occasionally to listen to the advancing dogs. The sow was in front, and as Rover dashed towards her, she stood for a moment staring at us with her little savage twinkling eyes, probably weighing in her mind the chances in her favour should she decide to charge. I fired at once, and she turned right back in her tracks, with Rover on her flank, awaiting his opportunity to seize her by the neck. I got in two shots at the boar as he rushed down a low bank on to another ledge below which the stream ran: the last one hit him, and with a fierce grunt he turned off to the left into some reeds; but the dogs had been coming up on him, and three good ones at once pinned him, considerably retarding his progress.

Now for the assegai! Glancing round, as I laid my rifle against a tree, I saw 'Mqedsa, his dark eyes gleaming with excitement, spring forward; but I was nearest, and had my blade well into the boar's flank as 'Mqedsa came up, and with a shout of "Ehe-he—yi gwaza 'mtakati!" ("Stab the evil one!") drove his keen weapon home into the boar's shoulder. But it only seemed to reinvigorate the tough old brute, who lunged viciously on either side. In endeavouring to recover our assegais we fell, the bank being wet and slippery. I was landed unceremoniously in a thorny tangle, which tore my neck and bare legs badly, but I had withdrawn my assegai. 'Mqedsa, less fortunate, fell in such a manner that the end of the assegai-shaft stuck in under his thick cloth waistcoat, which comprised his only article of dress, and with which he could well have dispensed on this occasion.

Buttons and stitches held only too firmly: for an instant the boar, with the boys, dogs, and assegai fast to him, brought up on the edge of the lower bank, which next moment gave way under the weight, and down they all rolled into the stream below! I just caught one glimpse of the old boar's grizzled snout and twinkling eyes (his face seemed to still wear a most imperturbable expression), and of 'Mqedsa's absolutely demoniacal look of anger and fear at finding himself fast to the boar, as they disappeared under the bank! Fortunately in the fall the plucky youngster extricated himself somehow from his durance vile, and though

covered with blood and dirt, and with a nasty bite on the calf of one leg, besides sundry minor rips and tears from the thorns, he was otherwise none the worse for his rough treatment. Dogs and boar were still struggling together under the bank, half in the water and half smothered by the fallen *débris* from above; so I jumped down to the rescue, and getting a good chance at the junction of the neck and shoulder, drove the broad blade down with all my strength, and with a gurgling rattle in his throat the boar fell dead. It had been a most exciting tussle from first to last, and one that some of the actors in it will not easily forget. Two boys had come to Rover's assistance and killed the sow which I had wounded, and which the dog held at bay for a long time single-handed, carefully avoiding each charge, and bringing the pig to a stand each time she tried to get away. All the dogs were by this time more or less cut about, in fact the three which had tackled the boar were fit for nothing more that day, thus making four *hors de combat* at our end of the kloof.

One place was now as good as another to stand in, as the pigs were scattered all through the bush, and shots falling at intervals on all sides. I had a good wash down, and after we had attended to the wounded dogs, seated ourselves in a cool spot overlooking the scene of the late struggle, while I got my pipe out to enjoy a well-earned smoke. A rustle in the bush across the stream drew our attention to a beautiful bushbuck ewe, which stood motionless on the edge of the scrub watching us intently, her rounded ears thrown forward, and one dainty forefoot slightly raised from the ground, a very favourite attitude for these animals to assume. She did not move even when I levelled my rifle on her, but when I lowered it, and whistled loudly, she dived back instantly into the cover, uttering those short sharp barks of alarm so well known to those who have hunted this wary and most charming of all antelopes. After a brief rest I took my rifle again, and stood in a spot where the bushes had been much broken and trampled down in the late scrimmage, making it somewhat clearer for shooting. Loyiwa came and joined me there, and informed me that he was the one who first came to Rover's assistance with the sow. The good fellow was grinning all over his face as he showed me his two blood-stained assegais, and allowed his thoughts to run riot amongst a fabulous number of

pots, full of pigs' meat, which in imagination he already saw boiling on the fire. Cries of "Enhla, enhla, hlanganisani ng' enhla; nay' inkunzi 'nkulu!" ("Look out above, close in; there's the big boar!") at last gave us notice that with all his cunning the old fellow had been so far outwitted and forced from his cover. How quickly, yet cautiously, he stole along! All his friends and relations had deserted him; he was "on his own hook" now, and he intended to do the best for himself that he could, whether it was fighting or flying. One thing he is certain of—the closed-up ranks of the advancing beaters, stretching across the narrowest part of the kloof, where the scrub has been trampled well down—and he does not consider it good enough to tempt his fate in that direction. Then the two side-kloofs, mere little gullies, that he knows of, are well guarded; he found that out an hour ago when he tried first one—and was fired at, but missed—then the other, when a headstrong young boar volunteered to escort him out, and got assegaied for his pains! No—escape is only possible in front; he knows the paths are watched, but, confident that many of those annoying dogs must be now out of the hunt, and that he stands a chance of slipping past in the widest part of the kloof, he starts off without further delay. "Hullo! that won't do!" he grunts to himself, as he tries up a little shallow gully—the old bed of the stream—and comes on to two elderly native gunners quietly snuffing, who at once let rip at him. Of course they miss him, and as for the unfortunate dog which accompanies them, and which flies vigorously at him, he coolly rips her open and leaves her kicking her last. Still, it was too close to be pleasant, for if the two elderly ones had been more on the alert, he might even now be—"ah well, never mind, time enough to fight when I can't escape." Then those confounded yells—if those elderly folk cannot shoot, they can shout—and he knows every one will be on the watch ahead. So he advances more cautiously than ever, along a little used path. Suddenly he stops; through the leafy screen he sees a white man and a great eager Kafir, standing together, only too much on the alert. "Worse still," he thinks, and *very* carefully creeps back on his spoor, then turns off towards the lower run, and as a final precaution stands an instant to make sure whether all is as clear ahead as it seems. That moment's hesitation costs him his life!

Yes, all is clear, and now for it! "Nansiya, nansiya!" ("There he is!") yells a shrill voice from a mass of creepers on the low bank above, and whose owner even the boar's sharp eyes had not till then discovered. Too late now, and he makes no further attempt to fly, but facing round towards old Rover, who dashes at him, plants his forefeet and prepares to die. A savage lunge at the dog is evaded skilfully. Then, as Loyiwa, 'Mqedsa, and I spring down over the low bank, the gallant dog rushes in again, while the boar is watching us, and springing on its shoulders, seizes it by the cheek on the opposite side. Down on his knees falls the boar, grunting savagely. I am luckily first up to help my dog, and drive the assegai into the boar's back. To escape the furious charge which he attempts, I have to let go the weapon, and before Loyiwa can cut in, away roll boar and dog over the bank together, where the former combatants had broken it down, into the stream beneath. Over after them pell-mell, Loyiwa throwing me an assegai as we go, till we come to where the old boar again stands grimly and sullenly at bay, Rover being quite unable to lay hold again, his foreleg being cut across to the bone, though he still faces his foe with an equal amount of determination, and barks furiously. Two short quick attempts to charge, a feint on one side, and Loyiwa's assegai is driven deep into the boar's bristly flank, with the strength that fierce excitement lends to a strong arm. I think I never saw a boar die so hard. In the water and out we struggled together,—the wild cries of my dusky allies, the fierce grunting of the boar, and Rover's deep echoing bark combining to make the scene one of thrilling excitement. It took us all we knew to avoid the boar's desperate rushes; but even so tough an animal as an old bush-pig is not proof against that terrible weapon, the stabbing-assegai of the Swazis, and the gallant old fellow collapsed at last, with no less than eleven assegai-wounds in his body!

We were soon afterwards joined by a party of the beaters, who were now closing up, and we together proceeded to drag the spoils from our end of the kloof into one spot. They consisted of five pigs, three boars and two sows: of these, a boar and two sows had fallen to my rifle, and one boar, the largest killed, to my assegai, in virtue of having drawn first blood. Twenty or more of the party were soon sitting round a fire, at which sundry tit-bits from

the pigs were merrily frizzling; but all other sounds were drowned in the unending babel of voices, as each member of the torn and bedraggled band, shouting his loudest, attempted to get the remainder to listen to his recital of his own prowess and success. So they were "all talkers and no listeners," as Jack describes the situation in a "Portuguese coffee-shop." We soon cooeied up the rest of the party, and for a full hour each and all gave themselves up to unrestrained talking and eating; whilst I busied myself in attending to the wants of the poor whining dogs, all of which were more or less hurt. One dog had been killed by the old boar, and another by a bushbuck ram, which when wounded, and brought to bay by some dogs, had fairly impaled one of their number upon his horns, driving them through the dog's throat even as he himself received his death-wound. Quaint little 'Madhlatshani lived, though it was all he could do to hang on to life. Rover lay, very unconcernedly, alternately licking his injured fore-leg and a nasty wound on his chest, and taking but little notice of anything going on around him except in the immediate vicinity of the fire, whence he knew he could expect an occasional scrap from one or other of the boys, amongst whom his daring courage had made him a general favourite. He had done his duty this day as he had done many a time before on hard-fought fields, and he knew it: for the rest, he was content, a scratch more or less troubling him but little.

So far our bag consisted of nine bush-pig and a bushbuck, besides the reedbuck and klipspringer killed in the morning; but yet one more pig was to be added to the list, by the prowess of my young guide 'Mqedsa.

After a good wash I was glad enough to sit down in the shade, on the spreading roots of a great 'mhlumi-tree, whose topmost boughs rose far above the surrounding stunted vegetation, and whose glorious wealth of rustling verdure afforded welcome protection from the sun's rays, which strove fiercely to pierce through the sparser foliage, and flooded the open spaces between the trees with brilliant light.

It was an enchanting spot in which we rested, but somehow the thoughts do not assimilate with the beauty of surrounding scenery when a gang of forty or more swarthy Kafirs are within a few yards of one, stowing away vast quantities of half-raw

meat as if their very lives depended upon it, and when the gentle chatter of the brook near by is entirely drowned by lusty voices singing in wild chorus

“Songs of war and songs of hunting,
Songs of medicine and of magic,”

and by the fiendish jabber of the *'kubonga*, so dear to a native's heart, as he coughs and expectorates through the stifling smoke-clouds of *insangu* (wild hemp)! My turn comes round for a nicely-browned piece of “fry” done to a turn and served on a ramrod; and when at last every one's appetite is for the time appeased, the pigs are cut up, the loads fairly distributed, and we set out in single file through the bush on our return journey.

It was then that an opportunity was afforded my little guide of showing what sort of stuff *he* was made of. He was walking behind me, carrying my rifle and his own assegais, when a moving object in the bush attracted my attention, and at the farther end of a long open glade I saw a pig slowly moving across our path in a very dejected manner, as if fully aware that he was the “last of the race” left alive in the bush. He was about 80 yards distant, and as the dogs were all behind, nothing had alarmed him. 'Mqedsa, all excitement, asked me to let him try a shot, which I willingly acceded to. As he spoke, the pig was just about to enter the bush on the opposite side, when, prompted by some fatal curiosity, she stopped for an instant to look around her. I at once quietly stepped to one side, and the youngster, kneeling down, fired. The pig dropped in her tracks, and so did 'Mqedsa, the heavy recoil from 100 grains of powder and a 540-grain bullet having laid the latter out as if for burial! The only difference was that the one never rose again; the other did, and quickly ran towards his prize, muttering imprecations all the way, the words *kahlela* (to kick) and *sabeka* (*Anglice*, awful) being particularly audible. The lad had made a creditable shot, though, and there were few prouder hearts amongst the company than his as he shouldered a large portion of the pig which he had shot. Why, he would have carried the lot, or have made a good attempt at doing so, and without a murmur, if told to!

Once more on the move, we tackled a very stiff bit of climbing before we got out of the kloof, then rested awhile on the ridge

while a boy went to fetch the klipspringer; scrambled down the slippery *'sidwala* (a large flat rock) on the other side, gained the flat, and then struck out homewards at a swinging walk, jest and anecdote serving to while away the time as we traversed mile after mile at the same unbroken pace. On the far side of a small kloof, just above the vlei in which we had killed the reedbuck in the morning, we saw a small object glittering like red gold in the level rays of the afternoon sun. It was an *'msumbi*, and I at once tried to stalk it, and succeeded in getting within 180 yards before it raised its head and stared hard in my direction. Taking low aim at 200 yards, I fired just as some of the dogs ran forward. My bullet, however, struck just over its back. It hopped on a little way towards the kloof, but I knocked it over with another shot before it reached the bush, much to the delight of the boys, who consider anything over 100 yards a long shot, especially at a moving object. It is very satisfactory to make a successful shot when others are looking on, but how often does one do it? The best shots are invariably made when one is alone, and then follows the wish, "If only So-and-so had been here to see *that!*"

Slinging the little buck over my shoulders, I again rejoined the party; and picking up the reedbuck as we went along, we commenced the ascent of the ridge upon which the kraals were situated. Now, for the first time since we had separated in the morning, we saw the other division of our party winding in single file over another ridge, the boys remarking immediately we saw them, "*Ba bomvu*" ("They are red"), a sufficiently expressive idiom, which told that success had rewarded their efforts as well as ours. At the stream below the kraal all our party struck up a thrilling hunting-chorus, the ringing notes sounding far and wide over upland and hollow, and, reaching the ears of the good folks at the kraals, brought out a bevy of graceful laughing girls in all their finery of beads, armlets, and tastefully devised fringes. As soon as they saw us they started to race down the hill, as an outlet to their superfluous high spirits. No mock modesty threw restraint upon the welcome greeting they accorded us, as they pulled up by the path-side like a lot of unbroken colts, to let us pass, and to examine the gory trophies of the chase; then falling in in the rear, they joined their voices

in the chorus, which did not cease till we reached the kraals, where an impromptu dance was indulged in.

An hour later, when the curtain of night had closed around, and the silvery points of light in the vast dome above shone out



"An impromptu dance."

one by one till the heavens were studded as with glittering hieroglyphics; when the cattle were lowing contentedly within the safe enclosure of the kraal, and every available calabash and pot, filled to the brim with juicy meat, was boiling merrily over

the glowing fires,—these young girls gathered together in front of my hut-door, and their fresh musical voices broke forth in joyous song upon the stillness of the night: and as I leaned against the reed-fence, enjoying my pipe, and watching the young moon—as yet not fully installed as Queen upon the throne of night—hurrying towards her setting, the wild beauty and fascination of the scene held me spellbound. Then my thoughts turned to the many millions of this Dark Continent, and I wondered with the poet—

“Shall the edict of mercy be sent forth at last,
To break the harsh fetters of colour and caste?”

But all things come to an end at last, and so did not only the singing and my reverie, but also the apparently tireless activity of the hunters' jaws; and after thanking the numerous performers for the “musical evening,” and giving a final look to my horse, who seemed to have fully appreciated the “day off,” I turned in, whilst Rover ensconced himself in his favourite corner of the hut. We were both well satisfied with the day's sport, and but little likely to waken throughout the night, or indeed until the merry call of the partridges, the cooing of doves, and the piercing and prolonged notes of the rain-cuckoo called all nature to life and light again.

The day's bag consisted altogether of fifteen bush-pigs, one reedbuck ram, one klipspringer ram, one bushbuck ram and one ewe, and one 'msumbi ewe.

A fine clear December morning ushers in one of those glorious days peculiar to the early summer in these latitudes. A heavy mist falls till sunrise, when it assumes the form of a light fleecy vapour of snowy whiteness, not lying grey and heavy over hill and valley, as on dull days, but ever on the move, curling and writhing in fantastic shapes about the kloofs and water-courses, stirred into ceaseless motion by the cool north-east wind, to vanish at last, like frightened ghosts flying to the regions of illimitable space, as the sun comes up and gains strength. Glorious blendings of colour scintillate on every dew-laden leaf and grass-blade; and everywhere is fragrance, light, and beauty.

With their usual defiant nonchalance a troop of pigs, supposed

to number nearly twenty, had been raiding in the mealie-gardens lying in a broad krantz-enclosed valley between the 'Mpatza and 'Mshatsa kraals and a group of outlying kraals occupied by less sociable headmen, who preferred to keep to themselves rather than join the patriarchal circle on the opposite spur. Every available patch of ground in this valley was well under cultivation, and it was a merry scene the eye would rest upon any day throughout the months of January, February, and March when the 'mabele (Kafir corn) was ripening, and every watch-hut, of which there were scores, was crowded with young laughing girls and sturdy little pottle-bellied youngsters, shouting and singing and jingling all manner of noisy instruments with intent to scare off the great flocks of finches—principally 'masakabula (Whida finch) and the jaunty little 'nhlokohloko—which from sun-up to sun-down fly hither and thither amongst the stalks of ripening grain, endeavouring to snatch a mouthful from before the usually watchful eyes of the girls. These latter, however, I noticed, usually had their love-sick swains in attendance, and whether, under such circumstances, the depredations of the birds received their due amount of attention is, I think, open to question. At sunset the girls were relieved by the men of the kraals, who, armed with guns and assegais, spent the night watching for pigs, bushbuck, and duiker, which, if they had their way, would very quickly complete the destruction commenced by the birds. But it was not often that the pigs effected an entrance into these gardens, as they were almost surrounded with kraals and watch-huts, and even porcine impudence was daunted by the possible danger that might accrue to any foraging party. When they did so, however, there was usually a tremendous amount of mutual recrimination amongst the watchers. I often noticed that the pigs always attempted to enter the gardens in a body, and never appeared to realise that the danger would be collectively less if they scattered and tried at different points.

Anyway, upon the night preceding the day in question, a large troop had passed the sentries, and, amidst much champing and satisfied gruntings, had laid waste a very considerable area of young mealies. The extent of the damage was not discovered till daylight, but steps were at once taken to bring the delinquents to justice; and whilst word was sent here and there

amongst the kraals, two or three boys hurried up to headquarters to report to the chief, and thence gather together a strong contingent. I was first apprised of the occurrence by three or four girls who came running over to my camp, to find me busy cleaning the head of a fine oribi ram I had shot the previous day. I at once accompanied my informants back to the head-kraal, with Rover and three other dogs, and armed with an old sporting Martini. News flies quickly amongst the natives, and in less than half an hour I joined a large crowd which had collected upon the spot appointed for the meet. For another hour after my arrival straggling parties continued to drop in and swell the ranks, until at last it appeared that every kraal had "sent up its tale of men," and we mustered over one hundred. I fancy if the old boar—lying so comfortably in that cool shady spot on the edge of yonder kloof, with his belly full of filched mealies, the white milky juice from the soft grain still plastered round his bristly jaws, and surrounded by his wives and children, and his children's children to the third and fourth generation—could only peep out and see the eager armed band just awaiting the signal to move off and encircle him and his in a belt of fire and steel, he would very quickly betake his overfed carcass to some safer retreat.

Apparently the extinction of that luckless troop of pigs is a foregone conclusion, but the proverb concerning "the best-laid schemes o' mice and men" was to be verified on this occasion. At the very first intimation of danger the wary brutes stole away round the kloof, and climbed out of a steep narrow donga—every one, with the exception of two youngsters, getting away unseen. These latter ran down the kloof on top of my party, and Rover very soon collared one and killed it, some of the Kafirs assegaing the other. It did not take us long to hit off the spoor, though our hopes fell considerably, as pigs, when thus disturbed, will not unfrequently cover a great distance before bringing up. Unluckily for them a number of girls, going down to the river for water, saw the pigs enter the next kloof, and, by dint of shouting from the opposite ridge, served two good objects—forcing the pigs, which feared danger in front, to remain where they were, and saving us the delay of taking the spoor all the way. The dogs went along on the fresh spoor all too quickly, and we had to

go our best to be in it at all. Having entered the long narrow kloof, the pigs had turned off to the left and taken down to the river, within 100 yards of which the kloof widened and formed an irregularly-shaped marsh covered with long reeds; while on either side of the vlei were extensive mealie-gardens, the dense bush which formerly occupied the spot having been cut down and burned. There was barely time to get down to the lower end of the kloof before the dogs gave tongue, and soon afterwards, barking fiercely in one spot, proclaimed a bay. Only those who have heard the shouting and yelling that takes place under such circumstances can realise what followed. The dogs had come on the pigs, and three of the latter had pluckily stood at bay in a thorn clump, giving their companions opportunity to escape. Three shots fell quickly in succession; then a renewal of the shouting, yelling, and barking, though with increased violence. But I had other things to attend to. The pigs rushed down the kloof in a body; but being in pretty good training and lightly clad, I succeeded in reaching the spot where the bush terminated on the edge of the marsh, and the most likely for the pigs to break cover. Immediately afterwards three or four rushed out to my right and above me, at which I fired two shots, wounding one, the Kafirs assegaiing it before Rover could get up. A crowd of boys ran down the hill on the other side with wild shouts, their weapons glinting in the sunlight, and entered the bush at a spot where the dogs had hold of another pig amongst some big stones in the kloof.

Then with a rush came a lot of thirteen or fourteen pigs out of the bush into the reeds, which swayed and crashed before their impetuous advance. Two went out close to me, both of which I accounted for in three shots; others that were hidden in the reeds close by darted off to the right, only to be met with shots from that side, as the boys swarmed down and cut off their retreat to the kloof. That which but a few moments before had been a great, unbroken, and almost impassable reed-bed, now became a trodden-down mass of muddy leaves and stalks, amongst which the wildly excited Kafirs rushed hither and thither stabbing right and left.

Not feeling inclined to indulge in a mud-bath, I was amusedly watching proceedings, when I marked a solitary pig making off

across the mealie-lands opposite. Two shots at him, both misses, turned him, however, and he rushed back into the reeds. Next moment, out of the very place he ran in, another pig, or it might have been the same one, rushed out, and started off across the open as hard as he could travel. A group of girls who were watching operations from one of the huts, pluckily ran forward and tried to turn him by shouting in front. But such an insult was more than he could brook; and putting on extra steam, he charged right at them. As they scattered right and left, I got in a shot: it was another miss, but only just a miss, for the turf flew up between his legs. I pushed another cartridge in, took a trifle coarser sight, and the unlucky pig fell spread-eagled in his tracks. I now ran to join a group of natives on the river-bank, where I could see they were having some fun all to themselves. Three wounded pigs were at bay in the reeds; so laying my rifle down, I ran in with an assegai. Backwards and forwards through the reeds swayed the struggling forms; two of the dogs were done for, ripped open from shoulder to flank; and one unlucky native, who had not been smart enough on his pins, had been charged, and his leg was cut to the bone. Finding myself in company with Loyiwa and Muntumuni, we joined forces, and pressing forward together, got our assegais home into a tough old brute, who was already wounded in other places, but had not the faintest intention of giving in. "Bona, bona!" ("Look out, look out!") came the warning words, and as the boar wheels round, lunging savagely, the assegais are wrenched out of our hands; we sprang to either side; then again, watching a chance, closed in. My assegai was soon broken, so I was thrown out; but Rover, of whom up till that time I had seen nothing, rushed in, and savagely seizing the boar by the nape of the neck, pinned him fast and brought him to his knees, when, under repeated thrusts, the plucky old fellow sank down dead on the bank, game to the last.

Twelve pigs, not including the two squeakers killed in the first kloof, fell that day; not a single dog was unhurt, and two were killed. But it would certainly be many a long day before the few that escaped would venture back into those mealie-gardens!

The largest boar I ever bagged I came across in a very peculiar manner. I was riding over to my place one day, after a long, tiring journey, and accompanied by a young hound of great

promise, which a friend had lately given me. Passing a small vlei, close to the bridle-track, a reedbuck ram jumped out, and as I was near home, I dismounted and fired at him: he ran about 100 yards and dropped dead almost on the track. At the shot, a ewe, about three-parts grown, ran out; and being desirous of trying my new acquisition, I jumped on my horse, and "sah-ed" the dog on. He saw the ewe at once and gave chase; but as they kept away to my left, crossing the head of a large kloof, I was soon out of the running, and on reaching the summit of the ridge could neither see nor hear anything of my dog. So I rode back to the dead ram, and proceeded to cut off the two legs and fasten them to my saddle, covering the remainder of the buck up, to be left for a boy to carry. I had laid my rifle against a tree, and was endeavouring to light my pipe on the lee side of the horse, when I fancied I heard something coming along the path; and believing it to be my dog returning and panting heavily after his run, I looked up quickly, and to my astonishment saw an enormous boar-pig coming along straight for me, trotting about 10 feet from and parallel to the bridle-track. As I stooped cautiously down to pick up my rifle, I saw my dog coming over the hill, behind the pig, at a quick trot, and about 200 yards distant. The latter, oblivious of the danger which threatened him in front, quickly heard the dog coming on and stopped, facing half round and cocking his ears.

I could see at a glance that he was a magnificent animal, with a fine pair of tusks, which were distinctly visible, even though the mouth was closed. Before he had made up his mind as to the nature of the uncanny beast following in his rear, I fired into his great brawny neck, and he dropped with a deep groan, dead in his tracks.

I had this boar cut up and carried over to the house, where I weighed him in sections, which gave a total of 235 lb., and as a large quantity of blood was lost, and some of the entrails not weighed, I am certain that his actual live-weight would not have been less than 245 lb. His tusks were of unusual size, and protruded $4\frac{3}{4}$ inches from the jaws.

I should mention that my dog had not succeeded in coming up with his buck, probably having lost it in one of the many kloofs which intersected the country in every direction.

CHAPTER V.

BUSH-DRIVING.

Unsportsmanlike—A great temptation—Choice weapons—First blood—Running the gantlet—"Schellem, baas!"—Native dread of snakes—Fables—The black 'mamba—Green 'mamba—Bitten by a 'mamba—Brown 'mamba and *boom-slang*—Boer nomenclature—*Indhlondhlo*—Rover's secret—Leopard's spoor—How to select a likely position—A favourite kloof—Nature *versus* art—In the kloof—'*Mavondze*—Rover rejuvenated—'Msumbi afoot—A plucky performance—Speed *versus* persistence—Never again—Pigs—Boar and sow killed—Porcupine—Another bushbuck—Traces of the leopard—A surprise—In my power—A head-long fall—A fine beast—A varied bag.

IN order to clearly understand the manner in which the smaller game is sometimes hunted in the rough country which I have endeavoured to describe, it is necessary to refer to bush-driving, though I do so with reluctance, feeling sure that the relation will not meet with much approval from sportsmen. Look at the matter how one will, it is impossible to call this mode of circumventing game a fair and sportsmanlike proceeding. It often becomes a mere battue, in which success is not gauged by skill or endurance, but by sheer good or bad luck. Shots are almost certain to be obtained at short ranges, and indeed in many cases a smooth-bore is more frequently used than a rifle. Still, after all, some excitement may be got out of a drive, if it is well conducted. The uncertainty as to the number and quality of the game which may be met with tends to increase one's interest in the operations, and the mere companionship of the numbers sometimes engaged makes such meetings occasionally very enjoyable.

It was a motley crowd that assembled round my house one morning in the latter part of October 1891. At least six different tribes of Kafirs were represented on that occasion, for I had sent word round to all the neighbouring kraals both far and near, telling them to muster up and muster strongly; and as they knew I had given orders for a big brew of Kafir beer to be made, of which they could all partake before starting in the morning, it may be relied upon that not many of those stayed away who by any means could arrange to come. It is worth while to walk amongst the groups of natives gathered together on such an occasion, for the sole purpose of examining their guns and the other wonderful weapons with which they are armed; and it is safe to say that, as far as the guns or rifles are concerned, there are very many of them which I would prefer to stand in front of rather than behind. Some will put about 20 grains of powder into a strong, serviceable, though old Dutch rifle, a weapon capable of standing about 9 drams easily, whereas another will put a handful of powder into a light worn-out old gun that is quite incapable of shooting straight and kicks like a horse. Amongst these broken-up tribes of Kafirs it is very rare to see good assegais such as a Swazi or Zulu would carry. Unlike these latter, they take no pride whatever in their assegais, and rusty, ill-formed, ill-finished weapons are the result. My inspection of the crowd thus noisily gathered around me on the morning of which I write did not cause me to alter my opinion as to their efficiency, but the amount of talking going on led me to anticipate a goodly supply of that great desideratum in a bush-drive, noise. When the straggling parties ceased to come in I had the beer passed out to them, and told off so many to a pot, according to its size and the quantity of its contents. Kafirs are adepts at stowing away the greatest possible amount of this favourite beverage in the shortest possible time, and these did their best to maintain their reputation.

About half an hour afterwards we were all under arms, and making at a sharp walk for a high ridge, from which we could see the ground we intended to hunt over, when we could form our final plans as to the disposition of the beaters. As we had ample time before us, I suggested that we should beat two of the smaller kloofs which lay on our right, and from any one of which

it was quite possible we might get a bushbuck out. The very first one we tried held three 'msumbi, which, as usual, gave us a great deal of trouble to dislodge them from their bush home. Backwards and forwards, from one end of the little kloof to the other, under and through the thorny scrub, where even the little weasel-bodied Kafir dogs could with difficulty follow many yards in their rear, they ran any way but outside to where the guns were posted. In the meantime a number of the boys tackled the other kloof, which was some 150 yards distant, though the two came very nearly together at the upper end. I was standing under a shady tree, in the apex of the angle formed by these kloofs, but directing my attention to that in which the 'msumbi were afoot. The others worked up to the head of this kloof without turning anything out; but just on the edge, and when, in fact, some of the beaters were already outside, a young bushbuck ram jumped up and came directly towards me. He was not over 50 yards away, and as I raised my rifle he saw me and stopped at once, gazing curiously; another moment and he lay kicking upon the ground.

I stepped forward to keep off the two or three dogs which were running upon his spoor, and as I did so, "Nang' u pumile 'msumbi!" ("There, an 'msumbi has gone out!") shouted the boys behind me; and turning quickly round, I saw two of the 'msumbi—that had been leading the boys such a dance for twenty minutes or more—just at my feet. I fired as quickly as possible as they raced past, but they were far too sharp for me, the bullet striking up the ground behind them. Then followed a rush and a general discharge of assegais, and away the two little fellows sped, having safely run the gantlet of the whole party, and but little startled by the explosion of the two wide-mouthed "pieces" fired by some of the boys, as they ran into the bush, and which did them no more harm than the assegais which they left behind them, quivering amongst the grass-tops.

We hung the bushbuck in a tree, and were moving on again, when some of the Kafirs who had gone back into the kloof for a drink were heard talking excitedly to one another in the bush. Upon my inquiring what it was that interested them so much, they called to me, "Schellem, baas" (*schellem* is a Boer word signifying "rascal," and frequently used by the natives when talk-

ing of any wicked or dangerous person or animal)—“Schellem, baas, nansi 'mamba 'dulu 'sihlahleni!” (“A *schellem*, sir, there's a 'mamba up in the bush!”) “All right, hold on till I come;” and I was soon standing with the group under a clump of Kafir-boom, while one of their number endeavoured to point out to me the whereabouts of the dreaded snake. Some minutes elapsed before I could make him out; but immediately he moved I caught sight of him, and at once gave him a bullet. He did not drop for some time, and I had to pelt him with sticks to fetch him down, as the Kafirs—all of whom, without any exception, are ludicrously afraid of any snake, venomous or non-venomous; indeed they don't believe in the existence of the non-venomous—would not come near, but stood at a respectful distance holding the dogs. Immediately he fell he assumed a fighting attitude, with his head drawn back and black forked tongue quivering menacingly; but I quickly put an end to him, and it proved to be a true black 'mamba, 8 feet 8 inches in length.

Perhaps a few details concerning this justly dreaded reptile may be of interest. There is no snake in South Africa about which a greater number of fables are told, and concerning the habits, nay, even the very nature, of which more confusion exists.

I have often heard it stated that the 'mamba is but the fully-matured form of some other reptile known by a different name when young, though I have never heard what particular one it is supposed to be. From a conversation I lately had with Mr Steele, the energetic Curator of the Durban Natural History Museum, I gleaned that he also holds that opinion. Certain it is that I have never met any one who can say he has seen a young 'mamba—that is, to recognise it as such; and of the scores of natives whom I have asked, not ten of them have professed to have seen one. The 'mamba is generally believed to be most variable in its colouration, and on that account the existence of five or six species (varieties?) has been suggested. I do not think, however, that sufficient is known of this reptile to warrant so arbitrary a conclusion. Personally I can only be certain of having seen one variety, the black 'mamba. The green 'mamba, whose common occurrence in Natal is beyond question, I have never seen in any part of the Eastern Transvaal; in fact, with

one exception, when I saw a large green snake—a 'mamba as I believed—in a tree, near the Libombo range, I am not aware of ever having seen this reptile alive. The brown 'mamba is another commonly reported variety, and some years ago I was bitten on the wrist by what was supposed to be one of these snakes, a slim-looking reptile about 5 feet in length. Judging from the after-effects of the bite, it was certainly a most venomous snake, to whatever species it belonged; but I was pulled round by igniting a charge of powder from a Martini cartridge upon the wound, and drinking copiously of brandy. I have many times seen the so-called brown 'mamba in these parts, but have always believed it to be the *boom-slang* (tree-snake) of the Boers, which, according to many authorities, is non-venomous. This latter reptile is known to be exceedingly variable in its colouring, and the question arises whether, after all, the *boom-slang* and the 'mamba are one and the same.

If they are, then authorities upon the matter have been in error in supposing them to be non-venomous, for I could multiply instances of the terrible powers of the black 'mamba which have come under my own observation. The Boers designate the 'mamba *boom-slang*, but this is possibly owing to the poverty of their vocabulary; every river with a number of rocks and boulders in it is called *klip rivier* (stone river), those with sandy beds are styled *zand rivier* (sand river), though often by way of a change the appellations are reversed, and a sandy stream becomes *klip rivier*, and a stony one *zand rivier*. The whole character of the river is usually judged by its nature at the particular spot where their waggons happen first to cross it. Hence any snake seen in the trees is a *boom-slang*.

At one time I believed the so-called brown 'mamba to be the undeveloped form of the black, as it never attains to the size of the latter; but later observations have convinced me of the mistake, for I have seen black 'mamba no longer than an ordinary specimen of the brown. And what has more than ever convinced me that this latter reptile is a totally different species is the fact that its fangs are always erect, and it has teeth in both jaws. These, I believe, are distinctive peculiarities of the sub-order Colubrinæ.

The black 'mamba, with its shielded head and broad scaled

abdomen, would at first sight appear to belong to the same sub-order, but its fangs are erectile, and lie back in the jaw when the reptile is inert. This peculiarity would refer it to the Viperidæ, but then we are at once confronted with the tapering tail, so that altogether it is a very puzzling reptile. The conformation of the head is that of a non-venomous snake, and its movements are indescribably rapid. The specimens that I have seen and killed have been of a uniform deep purplish black, with a very rich bloom upon it like that on a grape.

The crested *indhlonkhlo*, considered by the Zulus to be the king of snakes, is also said to be a variety of the 'mamba.

After we had satisfied ourselves that the *schellem* was beyond the power of harming any one, we set out down the slope of the ridge towards a shallow spruit which ran along the bottom, and when about half-way down turned out two duikers, at which I fired three shots as they bounded away like india-rubber balls through the grass. Of course I missed them, and away went our pack in full cry, but they did not go far before they abruptly pulled up, and came trotting back to us, looking very disconcerted. All but my old dog Rover, and as we crossed the spruit and commenced the ascent of the opposite ridge, we noticed his absence, and I sent a boy back at once to call him, thinking just possibly I might have hit one of the duikers after all, and he had caught it. Soon after we saw the boy enter a strip of bush by the spruit, and emerge again carrying a buck, a full-grown duiker ram. We carefully examined him for a wound, but he was untouched, the only marks being those on the throat where Rover had seized him. How he caught it is a mystery, and will remain so, for Rover keeps such matters strictly to himself; but he has often nailed a buck in a similar manner, though, being so old now, is quite incapable of running into an unwounded one. The ridge gained at last, we quickly formed our plans.

Not only was the kloof an extensive one, but it possessed further disadvantages in the shape of numerous branch kloofs and dongas, all thickly wooded, entering it upon both sides, and more frequent towards the lower end; so that with the comparatively few available boys which I had, it was evident that the only chance of a successful beat was to start at the lower end and work up. As a rule, this is not a successful plan to adopt, as

bucks that will run down a kloof willingly enough before beaters, invariably endeavour to break back if an attempt is made to drive them up-kloof. However, under the circumstances, there was no help for it, so having posted half-a-dozen of the best shots at the most likely openings, while the remainder walked off towards the lower end, where they intended to start beating, I went some little way up the ridge to select a likely spot in which to post myself.

Near the top of the ridge, on some soft red soil thrown out of a hole by a porcupine or ant-bear, I saw the very fresh spoor of a leopard, though after a most careful search could not ascertain in which direction the brute had gone off.

It was no easy matter to pitch upon a good position in which to stand whilst the drive was in progress, as far more depends upon careful selection in this matter than would at first sight appear. A steep bank either inside or outside the bush of course renders the chance a bad one, for game invariably endeavours to escape by the easiest points of exit; the very best places to choose are those where slight undulations in the ground form tiny gullies entering the main kloof—if there is plenty of scrub about so much the better; at such spots game-tracks will invariably be found leading into and from the bush, and there, if anywhere, your game will try to get out.

As a rule, of course, the only animals one expects to turn out of such a kloof are pigs, bushbuck, and 'msumbi; and in each case the near proximity or otherwise of another bush must be taken into consideration. 'Msumbi, usually the first to move, are the last to leave a bush, as they will do their utmost to remain in the one kloof by dodging the dogs with a view to eventually getting behind the beaters. Bushbuck more often break back, but if they go out in front of the dogs, they will steal along through every patch of cover which can afford shelter; and when forced to take to the open, will hurry over it at their best pace towards the next nearest kloof. Pigs almost invariably make for the nearest stream of water, where the thick low brushwood on the banks affords them more security, and across which they will swim if necessary, as they are very expert in the water.

The kloof we were hunting on this occasion was a particularly rough one, the two ridges running down, one on either side of it,

being covered with large boulders, that had become detached from the great rocky backbone, as it were, that crowned the summit of the main spur above,—an irregular ridge of rocks, which could be traced for miles, running north and south through the country. A broad belt of thick cover skirted both sides of the kloof, though a grass-fire which had lately passed over the ridge on which I stood had made considerable inroads upon the driest patches of grass and bush. The fire not having crossed the kloof, the cover on the opposite bank, between 200 and 300 yards distant, was still undisturbed. Under ordinary circumstances anything started in the kloof would of a certainty run out on that side; but as the nearest bush in that direction was half a mile distant, and they would be forced to cross three very open ridges before reaching it, I decided upon remaining where I was, and selected a likely-looking place, where a long arm of the main kloof ran up into a little dry gully, well burnt off, but with numerous patches of green scrub throughout its length. I had often stood in this spot before, for the kloof was an old favourite, and never failed to produce good sport. Above my post it was scarcely practicable for any distance, being backed by an irregular krantz, heavily wooded, and covered with an impenetrable barrier of *'mcopi* thorns. Seated on a small flat rock, under the shadow of an *'mbuli*-tree, with my rifle across my knees, I gave myself up for the moment to a careful inspection of the surrounding ground—a very necessary precaution in such cases—and to the thorough enjoyment of the beautiful scenery. How is it that the charms of wild Nature can never pall? We may look at the most beautiful botanical collection, the most artistically and naturally laid-out gardens or parks, and admire, nay, even go into raptures over the diversity of gorgeous colouring, but sooner or later enthusiasm gives place to calm admiration, until at last we can take an interesting book and sit down amidst all the surrounding beauties, scarcely taking the eyes off its pages, content merely to remark, “How pleasant it is here!” But where in all her wild beauty Nature reigns supreme there can be no such indifference to her charms; she is as she was when the world began, ever new, yet still the same, changing ever, yet changeless, everlasting!

Fully three-quarters of an hour elapsed before I heard, borne on the light morning breeze, sounds which announced that the

drive had commenced. I could picture to myself the startled game in the kloof when, above the rippling murmur of the brooklet, the amorous cooing of the bush-doves, and the rustling of the trees overhead, they caught the first low whimper of the dogs and the loud clear shouts of the beaters. How they would raise their heads, and springing to their feet, with distended nostrils and nervously twitching ears, gaze anxiously in the direction whence danger threatened! The cautious little 'msumbi would start from its "seat," where amongst the dead yellow leaves it was taking its morning siesta, and come bounding along some narrow bush-track, till it reaches a little side-gully, up which it slips, and creeping in under an overhanging screen of 'mfomfi - bush, stands there to await events; but the still more wary bushbuck refuses to move until better satisfied as to what other direction besides that from which the shouting comes may be considered unsafe.

The beaters, after entering the bush, very soon get into line and advance up the kloof, shouting, beating the tree-stems, rattling their assegais and knobkerries against the light ox-hide hunting-shields, throwing stones about, and encouraging the dogs by low, continued whistling. It is delightfully cool in the kloof, and the dogs, no longer feeling the heat of the sun, hunt keenly. Some delay is at first caused by a number of 'mavondwe (ground-pigs), to which the dogs, one and all, eagerly give chase. I do not know why it is, but I have never yet seen a dog, even a steady, trained pointer, that can resist the temptation to frivolity that these active rodents afford. Even old Rover forgets his campaigns against lions and leopards, and the weight of years upon his shoulders, and becomes young again, joining in the pursuit with a delight that the Kafirs and his canine companions share to the full. The natives will leave any game they may be in pursuit of to follow these animals, and some of their dogs become wonderfully expert at catching them. They killed four on this occasion before they again took up the drive; but not long afterwards the dogs dashed off in front of them, and raced up the kloof in hot pursuit of an 'msumbi. The little fellow knew his ground well, though, and kept to a narrow bush-track through thorny underwood, until he reached a branch kloof. Up this he darted, and finding a likely-looking opening through

which to escape, ran out, nearly into the arms of a silently watching Kafir, who put up his gun and fired when the 'msumbi was already past him. The glancing bullet whistled away through the kloof, while the little buck, bounding through the scrub on the edge of the bush, headed down kloof again, and, re-entering the bush behind the beaters, saved his hide; for the dogs had long ago over-run the scent, and were now straggling back to the advancing line of Kafirs. A shot, quickly followed by a second, rang out across the kloof from another of the little side-gullies leading off from it, where two 'msumbi tried to break cover. One of them was hit and quickly secured. The other ran back, with some dogs in pursuit, which headed it, and it attempted to cross the kloof: in so doing it must have run close on to a bushbuck, as a perfect volley was fired, and cries of "Imbabala! entansi!" ("A bushbuck! down the kloof!") warned the beaters that the buck was coming towards them. They close round with wild shouts, which in no way intimidate the plucky ram, who has fully made up his mind to break back or die in the attempt. With lowered head and horns laid back he springs forward, sees the certain danger which threatens him from the unbroken line of armed beaters before him, darts to one side—striking viciously at a Kafir dog that attempts to collar him, and which only "saves its bacon" by rolling over, yelping, into a thorn-bush—runs almost on top of a loaded gas-pipe, which is fired in its face, but without effect, clears a great fallen tree at a bound, and again dashes straight at the line of beaters at a spot where it has been weakened by the absence of those who ran to intercept the buck in its first line of flight. He is clear, half-a-dozen assegais skim harmlessly through the bushes, and with powerful bounds he leaps forward, turns up through some thick scrub, and takes over the ridge towards the next kloof, passing within 50 yards of two other guns who blaze aimlessly at him, and disappears in the bush. Well done, old fellow! you deserve to escape; and would do so most certainly but for two of my dogs, Sabi and Bushman, who tirelessly follow on his spoor. Small chance for any buck that these two dogs together set themselves to follow; they have the persistency of the tortoise, and the buck's hare-like speed avails little against it, as they follow him yard by yard through all his windings and turnings. The buck has gained many hundred

yards on them, and now stands on a bank, in the shade of the broad green leaves of an '*mnombela*-tree, his lips slightly parted and flecked with froth, and his dark flanks heaving. He thinks himself safe now, but still gazes backwards down the kloof, and then at the ridge in the direction whence he has fled, his every sense on the alert to warn him if any further danger threatens. A rustling amongst the dead leaves startles him, he hears the heavy breathing of some creatures in the bush, then a low cry—his deadly enemies are upon him notwithstanding all his care! They burst through the intervening bush, and sighting their quarry, break out into full cry, as—with a terrified, hunted expression in his beautiful eyes, and one glance back, as the thought of standing to fight comes over him—he springs forward again, tries to get out of the head of the kloof, but finding the bank too high and steep, turns and heads back towards his old kloof, his old home. But he is fated never to enter it again. He tops the ridge, and as he bounds down the slope towards the bush he casts anxious glances round to see if any of his former enemies are in sight, but he does not see the most formidable of them, for he still comes straight on to where I was standing in the shade, with raised rifle. A louder shout than usual echoes through the kloof. He knows the dogs are behind; but dare he face that bush again with its yelling line of beaters and its thousand hidden dangers? Does not a race with the dogs in the open offer him a better chance for life? Doubtful, he hesitates and pauses, and the next instant falls heavily on the burnt ground, dead almost ere the smoke has cleared from the muzzle of the rifle that has laid him low. The dogs soon after come running up, and finding the object of their pursuit dead, coolly lie down in a shady spot to rest after their persistent chase.

Every member of the party had by this time come in for a share of the fun, for the kloof held even more game than we expected, and the buck were on the move in all directions. I had just missed two shots at a bushbuck—which had run out the opposite side 200 yards distant, and, headed by the boys, hurried back again into the kloof at the foot of the krantz to my left—when I saw an object coming out of the scrub on the edge of the bush, the nature of which at first puzzled me somewhat; but as it came out into the open I saw it was a little

bush-pig—about half-grown—which, with four others following behind, was doing his best to get clear of all the noise and shouting in the kloof. I knew they would not be alone, and with rifle ready stood watching the opening out of which they came. Ever so slight a movement of the branches, and very cautiously a dark snout is thrust out through the grass; one step forward, and an old sow falls kicking on the ground, while another pig, a young boar, scuttles along through the grass, followed by the four young ones, and, with Sabi and Bushman close behind them, head down the kloof, attempting to turn in by a little game-path. Just inside they meet Rover and Jumbo, with some boys close behind them. The young ones jump away to the left; the boar takes the open for it, amongst a shower of assegais, one of which sticks in its hind-leg and drags. As he turns round to try and grasp it, the dogs and boys are upon him. Fighting round in a half-circle, it is several minutes before the boys can get an opportunity of putting an assegai into him, but when they do he soon rolls over, and they finish him off.

I walked across the gully to where the boys were standing with the dead pig, and as I reached them, heard the dogs barking furiously in the kloof, and a number of boys running down the opposite slope towards them. Scarcely thinking the dogs would make so much noise over one of the young pigs which I had seen, I ran down to join them and find out what it was. They had killed a large porcupine, but not before the dogs had been thoroughly well stuck all over with the quills. They are most dangerous things to allow a dog that one sets any value upon to tackle, for they frequently blind a dog completely, and I have had some of mine actually killed by them. As we were climbing back out of the kloof, I being on slightly higher ground than the boys, a bushbuck ran out nearly at my feet from a patch of thorny cover and made down the kloof. I could not shoot for fear of hitting the boys, but hurried out into the open as quickly as possible. Fortunately the beaters, who had now come up nearly abreast of my post, turned the buck, when it ran up kloof and hid in another patch of cover on the edge. The dogs and boys who had been with me at the porcupine again put it up, when, not caring

to tackle the open ground, it ran along a low ridge down into the hollow and close past my dead ram. I then got two shots at it, one of which hit it hard and turned it back into the kloof. Feeling certain it would try the opposite side when next it ran out, and as at this particular spot the other ridge was completely hidden from my view by the tops of the large trees in the kloof, I made all haste to get round the top along the edge of the krantz. I reached about half-way, when I heard a shot below, and from the shouting which followed, guessed they had killed the buck. Being by this time very dry, I tried to make my way down into the kloof for a drink, but found the 'mcopi thicket altogether too dense; so I walked back again to a spot where the descent was easy through a great rift in the rocks. Below me was a narrow ledge of rock, or rather a platform perhaps 6 feet square, and upon this I found hair and other remains of a number of "rock-rabbits" (*hyrax*), and upon closer inspection undoubted proofs of the presence of a leopard in the vicinity. I at once called to mind the confirmatory evidence of the spoor I had found in the morning, and thinking it just possible, as an off-chance, that the brute might still be lingering about an evidently favourite spot, I made up my mind to get the boys together and try and beat out the thorny jungle surrounding the krantz. I had a very careful search round first, then continued my descent to the water, and at the bottom found that a number of little streams ran along at the foot of the krantz, and joined together in a single stream a few yards lower down. From this place I could distinctly hear the boys talking. Laying my rifle down against a bush, I stooped to drink; then as I stood up again I heard a slight sound as of a stone or stick falling into the bush from the krantz above. Glancing upwards, I saw that which made me quickly seize my rifle, for on the rocks overhead, about 30 feet up and about the same distance from the ledge across which I had passed, was a splendid leopard, cautiously creeping along the broken edge of the rock, with one side pressed closely against the face of the krantz. He was apparently making for the thick patch of thorny bush which had blocked my way as I tried to get round the top, before descending.

I could not resist looking at him for a few minutes, as I felt

he was so completely in my power, and that at any moment a slight touch on the trigger would bring him down. He looked a fine brute, and in the shade of the overhanging foliage his hide appeared darker than was actually the case, while every now and again stray glints of sunshine pierced through the trees and threw golden beams across his painted flanks. A wide rift in the rocks confronted him, and he climbed on to a slightly higher ledge, possibly to enable him to spring clear of the narrow chasm, when, covering his dark shoulder with the little ivory



"Creeping along the broken edge of the rock."

bead of the foresight, I touched the trigger. "Woof, woof," answered the echoing report of the rifle, and the leopard with a wild spring dashed straight up at the face of the krantz, and then fell headlong, crashing down through the interlaced branches, and leaving great drops of frothy blood on the leaves as he passed through them. He fell amongst the rocks, and I ran up with my rifle ready, in case he wanted another shot. I saw him lying gasping and kicking with half his body in a stream of water, and carefully refrained from showing myself.

In a few minutes he was dead, and I shouted out in reply to some boys who had run up on hearing the shot. When they came up we carried the leopard down the kloof to where the other boys were cutting up the game with a view to apportioning the loads amongst the various carriers. There was a great shout of surprise, and the talking grew fast and furious when we arrived amongst the assembled crowd; the boys who were carrying the leopard making their approach known by shouting out exaggerated expressions of delight at the death of their enemy. The leopard was a good specimen in short summer coat, and measured 6 feet 10 inches, tail 2 feet 5 inches, height at shoulder 2 feet 6 inches, girth of forearm 11 inches. My bullet had entered low behind the shoulder, and passing upwards, went out high up, in front of the opposite shoulder.

We had not a large bag to show for the day's sport, but it was varied, and all had shared the fun. We had secured, besides the leopard, two bushbuck rams—horns 12 inches and 13 inches respectively—two bushbuck ewes, four 'msumbi, one boar, and one sow bush-pig, a porcupine, and a duiker ram killed by Rover in the morning, besides smaller fry in the shape of ground-pigs.

The leopard, after being skinned, was duly cut up and added to the other loads, the natives being very partial to the flesh of these animals; and then we started homewards, walking through the cool of the evening, and reaching my house just after dark.



CHAPTER VI.

BUSHBUCK - HUNTING.

Thomas Pringle, South Africa's poet—The great Teacher—Mr F. C. Selous on the intermediate forms of the bushbuck—The bushbuck of the Kahlamba - Libombo district—Comparison of intermediate forms—Coloration—Length of horns—Habits of the bushbuck—Playfulness—Localisation—An old stager—In the Kafir gardens—Tactics—Learning wisdom from experience—Stalking in the bush—Its charms—Wary habits—A successful ruse—A hardy buck—Fighting qualities—Swimming capacities—A well-known cover—A big ram—Rough going—Bushman speaks—On the wrong spoor—The ram escapes—Ungallant but strategic—For the sake of posterity—Yet one chance—Anticipation—

Fatal delay—A long shot—A rough scramble—At fault—Drawing on—
 Rover to the fore—Jumbo atones—His last fight—In the early morning
 —A surprise—Suspicion—A fresh complication—Worth the trouble—A
 false move—A lucky shot—An unintentional ducking—Diving for my
 rifle—Doing penance—"Nanso-ke, i file!"—A splendid ram—Another
 rifle goes down stream—Recrossing—Memories.

"AND as we journeyed up the pathless glen,
 Flanked by romantic hills on either hand,
 The bosch-bok oft would bound away, and then
 Beside the willows, backward gazing, stand."

Thomas Pringle, South Africa's poet! Name dear to all lovers
 of this favoured country, to all lovers of justice, as to haters of
 oppression! And where is the naturalist-sportsman who does
 not keenly follow him "afar in the desert"—

"By valleys remote where the oribi plays,
 And the gnu, the gazelle, and the hartebeeste graze"?

Reader, I have known, and possibly you have, what it is to
 wish—

"When aweary of all that is under the sun,
 With that sadness of heart that no stranger may scan,
 To fly to the desert afar from man!"—

have felt that

"There is rapture to vault on the champing steed,
 And to bound away with the eagle's speed,
 With the death-fraught firelock in my hand,
 The only law of that desert land!"

It need be with no self-satisfied wish to ostracise ourselves from
 our fellow-creatures that we seek the wilds,—only an intense
 yearning for a nearer, clearer insight into the mysteries of
 Nature; a desire to open wide her book, to study closely and
 yet more closely its every page, teeming as they do with subjects
 of deepest interest for the thoughtful and observant. "Away,
 away from the dwellings of men" we seek that "freedom and
 joy and pride" only there to be found; with the poet we listen
 spellbound as

"Bursts fiercely forth in battle-song
 The tale of Amakosa's wrong;"

and with him we join in the search for that grim old lion, and track him to

"The buffalo's well,
By the black eagle's rock, at the foot of the fell."

And perhaps some there are who labour under a sense of keen disappointment, or who feel their thoughts and actions cramped and confined amongst the endless shams and conventionalities of social life, till their belief in all that is good bids fair to suffer shipwreck. What more natural, then, than that such should turn to the freedom of the wilds, the realities of nature, and listen with quickly-calming pulses to her thousand mystic voices speaking ever in harmonious accents, in sympathising love to her children? Forgive, reader, if I weary you with such reflections, but they will intrude.

No writer was ever better able to bring home to the hearts and minds of his readers the scenes and incidents he so graphically describes than Pringle. And in this case he has certainly recalled to our minds an oft-observed habit of the bush-buck. As we approach the patch of cover in which he is lying, if we are on the alert we notice a slight quivering of the grass and bushes as he gathers himself together for a dash out, and only waiting till we are yet nearer, and himself in certain danger of immediate discovery; another half-dozen steps, and with a deep hoarse "bark" he springs out, his head held low, level with his back, his horns lying flat, and tail outspread like a feather fan. Crash! crash! two or three heavy bounds as he dives deeper into the scrub; then, reaching the far edge, and quickly covering a small open space, ere he enters the big kloof he turns and stands, gazing inquiringly at the intruder, one fore-foot slightly raised and the small delicately-rounded ears pricked forward; another bound, and he vanishes from sight in the silent, gloomy bush. Very intimate association with these the most beautiful, as they are the gamest, of all the smaller antelopes, has afforded me opportunities of studying their habits closely, and I will endeavour to give the result of my observations as carefully as possible. Mr Selous, in his first most able work, has very clearly shown how that the bushbuck of the Limpopo and that of the Chobe are intermediate forms between the black bushbuck of the Cape Colony and the harnessed antelope of

North Africa, and I think it not improbable that yet other forms will be found. The bushbuck of this district appears to me to differ in more respects than one from either of the above-mentioned intermediate forms, and there seems little doubt but that it is a marked variety. I am indebted to that gentleman's 'Notes upon South Central African Antelopes' for the description of the intermediate forms observed by him, and which I here give in tabulated form (p. 118) for the sake of comparison, together with that of the bushbuck of the Kahlamba-Libombo district.

In the young of both sexes of the form commonly met with in this district (Kahlamba-Libombo) a white stripe runs down the front of each leg, from the carpal and tarsal joints, widening out into an irregular white patch over the metacarpal and metatarsal joints. In the adult rams this mark is wanting; but on each side of the metacarpal and metatarsal joints, and just above the division of the hoofs, is a large white diamond. The adult ewes have these diamond marks also, and frequently retain the stripe as well, though it is less distinct than in the young specimens. The hair of the ewes is of two colours, being a pale brownish-grey next the skin, and bright red-yellow towards the tips; and in both sexes it is longest upon the underparts and haunches. The rams always have the collar of soft short hair round the neck; and adult ewes occasionally, extending about half-way round from behind. Half- and three-parts-grown rams have a very clearly defined white triangular mark between the eyes, the apex towards the nose; in the ewes and the young of both sexes it is wanting, and becomes very indistinct, sometimes being altogether absent, in the adult rams. Both the young and adult animals of each sex have two large white spots on each cheek, and I once shot an old ram with three on each side, and two smaller spots above each eye. It was a very old specimen, the colour of the body being a pale greyish-yellow, and without any spots except those on the head. I have never seen another like it, old rams being usually very dark in colour. The total length of an adult bushbuck ram is 5 feet, shoulder height 34 or 35 inches, girth of collar 24 inches. The horns average 12 inches in length, and old rams frequently wear them down to mere stumps. The longest pair I have ever secured measured 16 inches,

	ADULT RAMS.	YOUNG RAMS.	ADULT EWES.	YOUNG EWES.
Cape Colony	Dark brownish black, with two or three small spots on haunches and shoulders.	Reddish brown; more or less spotted.	Light reddish brown; white spots on haunches, and sometimes a few between shoulder and flank.	Red; more spotted than the adults.
Limpopo	Brownish grey, often without spots.	Red; a good deal spotted, with a few faint stripes.	Dark red, with a few white spots.	Bright reddish yellow; seven to ten clearly defined stripes; on each side twenty to twenty-five spots.
Kahlamba-Libombo	Deep brownish grey or brownish black; twelve to eighteen small spots on sides and haunches; three or four stripes, varying in distinctness in different individuals. An erectile mane all along the back.	Rich reddish brown; six to eight clearly defined transverse stripes; thirteen to twenty spots arranged along each side and on the haunches.	Rich reddish yellow; two or three more or less clearly defined stripes on each side, and twelve to eighteen spots.	Less distinctly marked than the adults.
Zambesi tributaries east of the Falls	Dark red; thickly spotted on haunches, shoulders, and sides with small spots; three or four faint stripes.	Less distinctly marked than the adults.	Pale yellowish red; much spotted, with a few faint stripes.	Lighter red, and not so much spotted as the adult.
Chobe river	Very dark red, approaching brownish black; large white spots, as many as fifty on a side, and sometimes as many as eight well-defined stripes. An erectile mane all along the back.	Pale red, faintly marked.	Rich dark red; beautifully spotted, and with a few faint white stripes.	

basal circumference $6\frac{1}{2}$ inches, but I have bagged four carrying horns of 15 inches.

Bushbuck are not gregarious, but keep together in couples; though, as in the case of reedbuck, during the months of December, January, and February, when the ewes are in young, and for a month after the fawns are born, the old rams keep apart, leading a solitary life, and are seldom seen. They are more thoroughly nocturnal in their habits than any other of the smaller antelopes, very seldom venturing out of their retreats until it is quite dark, and retiring again at earliest dawn. On cool evenings, however, they may occasionally be seen, standing in low thick cover, daintily nibbling the aromatic leaves and tender shoots of the bushes and shrubs, which form their principal article of diet. In the early mornings, too, they can be seen loitering about on the edge of thick cover or deep kloofs, enjoying the genial warmth for an hour or more after sunrise. But under such circumstances they are exceedingly difficult to make out, as they stand absolutely motionless, and will remain so as long as they imagine themselves unseen; but if any action on the part of the passer-by leads them to think otherwise, they dive back instantly into the thick bush, uttering a short hoarse bark of alarm.

In wet weather bushbuck will be about at all times, as they find it cool and pleasant: all antelopes move about more during wet or misty weather. On such occasions bushbuck exhibit great playfulness, racing and leaping about through the low scrub, and chasing one another into and out of the kloofs in a most amusing manner. I have often watched them thus playing about from the door of my house, as they acquire great confidence where they know they will not be harmed, though ever retaining their innate wary vigilance. In the mornings, after a wet night, their spoor will be visible on every footpath in the near vicinity of any bush frequented by them; they appear, indeed, to have a great partiality for walking backwards and forwards along these tracks. In any part of this district where there is plenty of thick cover and water near at hand, bushbuck will be found, and, as a rule, in such localities they are decidedly numerous, though their nocturnal habits and extreme watchfulness might lead one to suppose them very rare.

Unlike reedbuck, duiker, and other antelopes — which, frequenting comparatively open country, are more likely to be disturbed, and which on that account wander over considerable tracts, and constantly change their feeding-grounds—bushbuck are ever to be found in the same haunts, their range being very limited over a certain tract of country.

This holds good whether amongst the broken foothills, where kloofs and detached strips of thick bush are frequent, or on the flats of the Low Country, where the rivers are invariably margined by continuous dense cover. In the latter case, of course, their localisation is more difficult to determine, and the rule is likely to be less arbitrary owing to the greater number of predacious animals ever on the watch to maintain the balance of nature. I have known an instance of an old bushbuck ram that could always be found in a narrow strip of bush about 100 yards in length by 60 broad, and, except when he left the bush at night to feed, or happened to be temporarily disturbed, he seldom if ever left that bush for five years. I saw him first in 1887, and endeavoured scores of times since then to circumvent him fairly, as I would not allow him to be driven. I knew him well by his peculiar dark straw-colour, which paled as he grew older, but it was not until early in 1892 that he at last fell to my rifle. Bushbuck ewes invariably return to a particular spot to drop their fawns. Year after year, with the greatest regularity, they will revisit their favourite bush or kloof, keeping almost entirely out of sight, till in a few weeks' time they venture to move about at some distance from their previous shelter, accompanied by a delicate little red fawn.

Naturally enough their knowledge of the district to which they thus confine themselves is perfect, and it is wonderful to see the way in which a bushbuck, when forced to leave a kloof, will reach the shelter of the next, almost unseen, by taking advantage of cover which appears at first sight non-existent. These antelope always keep about in the vicinity of Kafir kraals, for the purpose of levying their share of taxation upon the plantations. They seldom touch mealies (maize) when they are of any size, though they eat the young tender plants; I have never known them eat the cobs, even when quite young and still soft. Pumpkin-leaves and ground-nuts ("monkey nuts," as they are

called locally) are, however, delicacies for which they will run almost any risk, and one buck will scratch up an enormous number of the latter in a night. They are very partial to wild fruits and berries of all kinds, the 'timbuli and 'matungulu amongst the first, and the 'hlangotshani amongst the latter, being their favourites.

Perhaps with the single exception of the leopard there is no more wary animal in South Africa than the bushbuck. If they have been hunted two or three times out of a particular bush or kloof, it is next to impossible to get a shot at them again by driving, as they will invariably break back, time after time, through the line of beaters. On one occasion I had a long narrow strip of bush driven backwards and forwards five times by about twenty Kafirs to try and turn out an old ram which, early in the morning, I had seen enter the cover. From first to last he never left the bush, but lying close until the advancing line almost trod upon him, he sprang up, and, with lowered horns, dashed back through the beaters, taking advantage of any narrow space between them, or if there was none, forcing his way through with but little difficulty. As a rule, if a buck thus breaks back, he will run out at the end of the bush from which the beat commenced; but not so a slim old bushbuck ram: he knows well enough that in all probability a rifle will be waiting for him; so having broken through the line, he runs about half-way up the bush, and again lies close till satisfied as to what is the next move the beaters intend to make. If they are instructed again to beat back without leaving the bush, that suits him admirably, for he will simply repeat his previous tactics; but if the boys are ordered out, and the beat again commenced from the top, he quietly creeps away down the bush again, nearly to the end, where he confidently awaits the advance of the line: as it approaches within a few feet of his hiding-place, he breaks through in a couple of bounds; and so on *ad infinitum*, till at last he is "given best."

To fairly stalk an old ram in the bush is, I imagine, one of the most difficult feats a sportsman can attempt. Bushbuck will always be found standing or moving about in the kloof till 9 A.M. or later; after that time it is useless to look for them, as they will be lying down in thick cover. Difficult as it is to

attain success in this branch of sport, the occupation is a delightful one, and I shall ever look back with feelings of keenest delight to the fresh cool hours of the early mornings thus spent under the rustling leafy arches, and in the deep, still gloom of the kloofs. The scent-laden air, the murmuring streamlets, the merry chattering of the monkeys, the twittering and song of birds, the loud mellow cry of the plantain-eaters, the dancing glowing sunbeams, the glorious consciousness of *life* in and around everything—amongst such surroundings his would indeed be a heart devoid of poetry and wanting in sympathy whose spirits could not rise to the occasion. I have succeeded in stalking and killing bushbuck in this way, but very seldom though I have tried scores of times.

Even when seeking for them in the early mornings, on the edges of the kloofs, I have lost many a good chance, either by failing to see them as they stand motionlessly watching, or by not ascertaining their nature when first my attention has been attracted to them, their suspicions being at once aroused directly one stops to examine them. Many a time I have only become aware that the object I have long been looking at, and taking for a bush, red in autumn leaf, or a brown stump in a patch of cover, was in reality a bushbuck ram, by getting the light at a slightly different angle, so that it has shone upon the white patch on the throat and the insides of the ears. I remember upon one occasion walking along the banks of a river in half-flood: on the opposite side was a strip of very thick bush, between which and the river-bank was a narrow open space perhaps 20 yards wide, and covered with round slippery stones of moderate size, and patches of scanty, coarse grass. A particularly fine bushbuck ram had evidently been walking along the bank, or perhaps drinking at the river, as I came along, and had seen me, and at once lain down close to the bank, amongst the stones, with his head stretched out on the ground, and his horns consequently pressed flat back upon his neck. Crouching thus amongst the dark stones, the tops of which were rounded, and just about the height of his back as he lay down, his colour—darkened by the rain which was falling heavily—so exactly assimilated with that of the grey rocks around him that he was practically secure from detection. I chanced, however, to look straight at him, uncon-

sciously attracted, perhaps, by some slight movement of the ears; yet I stood for some moments in uncertainty, and, still unsatisfied, I at last took my glasses out to examine it more carefully. The buck sprang to its feet instantly, and, with a defiant "bark" and a couple of long heavy bounds, disappeared from sight in the bush. The only chance one has in such cases is to make out the head of the animal, for move he will not; and whether standing or lying amongst stones, grass, or bush, it is equally impossible to make certain at a glance what it is, when merely a portion of the body—perhaps half in shade, half in the light—can be seen. And it seems so stupid a thing to do to fire at a stone, bush, or stump, just on chance. I have never done this myself, but have more than once "bagged" an inanimate object, fully believing it to be game.

Returning late one evening from an unsuccessful search for a buck, I saw that which I could have sworn was a reedbuck ram feeding a little below a ridge about 140 yards distant. There was the body showing very plainly and darkly against the skyline, the legs apparently hidden in the long grass, its head and neck every now and then bent down as if to crop the grass, and the horns showing quite distinctly when the neck was raised. "A soft snap," thought I, and at once aimed and fired. It was clearly a miss, probably high; but as the "buck" did not move, I soon had another cartridge in, and again fired. This time the report was answered by a dull "clap," though I must confess that it had a somewhat *woody* sound; the smoke cleared, and still my buck fed on, as if a bullet through its ribs was a matter of no moment whatever, in fact rather pleasant than otherwise! So complete was the illusion, however, that although grave doubts came into my mind, I put another cartridge into my rifle before I started to walk carefully forwards in the direction of this *hardy* buck. When I reached the spot the body of the ram resolved itself into an old dead tree-stump, raised a foot or two from the ground by the branches on its under-side; a few long tufted stalks of *tambuki*-grass, gently swaying in the evening breeze, accounted for the rest; the only little satisfaction granted to me being that of finding my bullet-hole through the decayed heart of the stump, "*achter de blad*" (behind the shoulder), and of reflecting upon what might have been if—

Old bushbuck rams become very fierce, and fight most savagely with one another. When hard pressed they will stand at bay, and woe betide the luckless dog that in his inexperience flings himself at the throat of such a one! Certain death upon the sharp horns will surely follow the rash act. I have seen a ram kill a large dog and put two others "out of action" in as many minutes, and besides having had several of my own dogs killed by them, have witnessed many other such instances with Kafir dogs. One night I heard two bushbuck rams fighting for fully three hours, and upon visiting the spot in the morning, turned out a fine old fellow and shot him: he carried a good pair of 14-inch horns, and was wounded in several places, the points of his opponent having in one instance pierced his nose and torn through it. But the latter came off second-best, for we afterwards found him (at least one of my dogs did) lying dead about 400 yards from the scene of the encounter, with a gaping wound in his abdomen, from which the entrails were protruding. I have also known a bushbuck ram to beat off a leopard—probably a young one, as they frequently fall a prey to the full-grown ones.

Bushbuck are bold and strong though slow swimmers; but they are so resourceful and have so many different tactics to fall back upon to avoid pursuit in their bush home, that they are very seldom so hard pressed as to be forced to take to water. In swimming they keep the body very low and the head held high.

I think the bushbuck, *when found*, is the easiest shot of all the smaller antelopes, as the range is almost invariably close, and the animal is very heavy and deliberate in its movements.

As I have stated, the longest pair of bushbuck horns I ever secured measured just a fraction under 16 inches, and as a short description of the death of their former owner will serve to show the nature of the sport, I will here relate it.

It was on February 20, 1890: I was proceeding on horseback, accompanied by three boys on foot, to a neighbouring stream, to look out a good spot for cutting some stout reeds for fencing purposes. I took my rifle and six dogs—my veterans Rover and Bushman, Slim (sister to the latter) and Sabi (both these have found their last resting-place on the hillside overlooking the kloofs they so loved to hunt through, victims to the deadly tsetse-fly), Spring, a greyhound, and Jumbo, a heavy and rather

useless Boer dog. On our way to the spot where I expected to find some suitable reeds, we put the dogs into some very thick and extensive cover, consisting of patches of long grass and ferns, and denser clumps of low thorn-bush interwoven with the ubiquitous creeper, *mkonto w'endhlovu* (elephant's assegai). This particular extent of cover usually holds one or more reedbuck, and this day I scarcely rode a dozen yards into it when a reedbuck ewe jumped out and ran straight for the boys, who were walking in line through the lower part of the cover. Not seeing clearly what it was that got up, I made over in the direction in which I heard the boys shouting; but the cover was fearfully dense, and as my horse leapt and plunged through, perhaps, the worst little bit of all, just out from under his nose sprang a splendid bushbuck ram and made over the ridge towards the nearest kloof. One glance at his horns proclaimed them worth any trouble to secure, and as I knew I could not see him over the scrub if I dismounted, I pulled in, and steadying myself in the saddle, endeavoured to get my sights on the buck's broad back as he dived through and under the thick cover; but it was useless, so shouting hastily to the boys, I dug the spurs in and gave chase. I kept my seat in the saddle with difficulty, as my good nag leapt over the thorny obstructions, and dived through the less resisting cover; but once clear of it, and on top of the ridge, I let him out as far as possible, and as he entered heartily into the fun, we were soon rattling down the slope at a merry pace. The buck made for a scraggy little kloof, which at its upper end divided into two arms, both of these being more thickly wooded than the main kloof. This latter led down to a very dense and extensive bush on the flats, into which, if the bushbuck once escaped, pursuit would have been impossible. I knew this, and also that an opening existed about half-way down the upper part of the kloof, across which, if he made for the bush below, the buck must pass and give me a shot. All I had to do was to reach it in time, and I had little doubt but that my dogs, when once the boys called them off the reedbuck and got them together, would very soon start the old bushbuck, in case he had chosen to lie up in any part of the kloof above the opening, as is their usual custom. I found it rough going, the grass long, and the low cover very thick in places; while hidden boulders,

slippery as glass, lay scattered about in all directions. But Moscow was a smart horse, and as sure-footed as a wild pig; so, with my neck intact, I very soon pulled up abreast of the opening and dismounted, commanding it at little over 100 yards' range, and feeling confident that I was ahead of my game. The veteran hounds soon missed their master, and, encouraged by the low whistling of the boys, commenced casting about, and very quickly picked up the old ram's spoor, carrying it into the left arm of the kloof. In a few moments I heard Bushman give tongue, followed almost immediately by Sabi, and then down they came racing through the kloof, waking the echoes with their merry music, and startling the crimson-winged *'magwala-gwala* from the highest tree-tops. And then at last I heard something crashing through the bush just in front of the dogs, and next instant a large bushbuck ewe broke cover, and with lowered head flew across the opening like a flash of light. With an angry remark I lowered my half-raised rifle, and shouted to the dogs, which had evidently crossed the old ram's spoor and run on sight.

"Nanso-ke, nanso-ke; nge'nhla 'mbabala!" ("There he is; there's the bushbuck above you!") Loud and clear rang out the warning shout from my boys, who had now appeared in sight on top of the ridge down which I had raced the buck. I was in the saddle in a jiffy, and raced to try and cut the ram off, as I realised that he had outwitted me by waiting quietly on the edge of the bush till the dogs had passed with the ewe, and then warily slipping out; and by keeping out of my sight in a small hollow of the ground, he ran along it, heading straight for another and more extensive kloof at the back, down which he would certainly have got clean away had not my boys, from their higher elevation on the ridge above, marked him in time. The act was an ungallant one anyhow, even if the strategy displayed was of the highest order; but probably this old ram was concerned as to the future of his race, and knowing that another such ram did not exist in the district, whereas ewes were plentiful, he thought that if he could save his hide by sacrificing the ewe, it was an act which posterity would applaud, and which would rather redound to his credit than otherwise. But he "reckoned without his host" for once. It very soon became evident to me

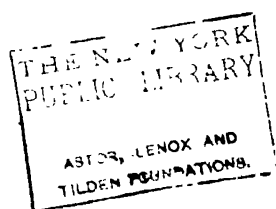
that I was too late to cut him off, as he gained the kloof far in front of me, and I had to pull up suddenly on the very edge of a steep, almost perpendicular drop, nearly 50 feet from top to bottom. There was no going farther with the horse, but yet one chance remained. The kloof intersected a chain of low, thickly-wooded kopjes—a rough stony bit of ground too it was, and a favourite retreat for koodoo, bushbuck, and pigs. From these kopjes, on the upper side, a small steep branch-kloof ran down to the main one, joining it at the point where it intersected the stony ridge. It was just possible that as the dogs were delayed, and not pressing him closely, the bushbuck might run up this small branch-kloof, and, crossing a narrow piece of open ground, take refuge in the thick cover on the kopjes; so I cantered down to a spot from which I could command an unobstructed view of the opposite ridge, and there dismounted and waited. And at last I heard the boys urging on the dogs as they entered the kloof on the spoor, and though a great distance still separated them, I knew that the old ram would have heard them also, and would now quickly decide as to the course he would take. Ten minutes passed, then "There he is, I believe! Yon dark object moving up through the scrub on the very edge of the smaller kloof; surely I'm right—yes, by Jove!" And hark! there come the dogs—I can hear them now very distinctly; and the doomed buck, trembling at the sound, stays no longer. Already he knows that his halting indecision will cost him dear, and he boldly takes to the open; but a few such bounds will place him in safety. Yet his boldness avails him little more than his caution, for the deadly rifle is a source of danger upon which he had not reckoned. The range was long—fully 400 yards—and my little Metford was only sighted to 300; but kneeling down, I calculated as carefully as I could, and pressed the trigger. Good line, but short, though ever so little—the bullet struck just under his feet. The ram gave a great bound, and as I again pushed a cartridge in and closed the breech, he had but 20 yards more to cover ere the kopjes were gained. Intensely excited though I was—for I knew what a trophy depended upon the shot—I got the rifle off steadily and smoothly; a dull, distant "clop" followed the report, the old ram stumbled, recovered himself, and next moment dived into the scrub on the kopjes. "Hurrah! surely

he's mine now!" Leaving my good horse quietly grazing, I scrambled and slid down the declivity into the kloof, and at the bottom met two of the boys. The dogs were well ahead, and it was necessary to keep up, though we found it a terribly hard piece of work getting out of the steep hill on the other side. But we laboured on, with torn arms and legs, through matted grass and thorny tangled underwood, till, panting and breathless, we at last reached the spot where the bushbuck had turned out across the open. Here we came on the dogs at fault, having over-run the spoor, but I saw little Bushman quickly and indefatigably working it out, near the spot where the buck had been when I fired. He stopped for a second, sniffed high upon some twigs, then with a glance at us, and an energetic wag of his fringed tail, that spoke volumes, darted off on the blood-spoor. We had scarcely yet recovered our wind, but—"Hi on, dogs, hi on!" "Hai lume, hai lume-bo!" we urged on our eager pack. Old Rover dashed past us with great crashing of underwood; the rest fell in, and tailed away over the stony ridge in full cry! Scrambling over the rough boulders, we tear our way through all opposing obstacles; diving, jumping, slipping, stumbling, and often and freely anathematising the unkindly nature of the country, whilst the merry music of the dogs, now entering another kloof on the opposite side of the ridge, tells us they are drawing on.

"Hurrah! Hark to that, boys!" Deep, clear, and resonant—none but old Rover can thus speak, and he never till his quarry is at bay. "Ehe, ehe, yi bam-be! yi bam-be!" we shout out for encouragement, as one after another the dogs chime in; and breathless, hatless, shirtless—for I and mine long ago parted company—we race over the last 20 yards of stone and scrub that lie between us and the last scene of all. The old ram's race is run: just in the middle of a clear swiftly-flowing brook, in a small hole caused by the drop of water from a tiny waterfall above, shadowed by overhanging trees, through whose leafy crowns dance the flickering beams of the morning sun, he still fights stubbornly for his life against cruelly unequal odds, for his near front shoulder is broken and he has lost much blood. But his last fight is a gallant one. The unfortunate Jumbo has atoned for all his faults, and now lies on a blood-bespattered



"He still fights stubbornly for his life."



rock, with his big head hanging swaying about in the water; the bushbuck's horns have passed through his lungs, and their life-blood mingles in the stream. Poor Spring lies gasping on the bank with a gaping wound in his neck. The other dogs still hang on by neck and flanks.

"Hark to him, Rover, boy! Yi bambe-bo!" and with a great effort the old veteran turns the overmatched buck over on to his side. We are already in the water. One venturesome boy seizes a horn; a single stroke urged by the massive neck drives the point clean through his palm. But it is the last effort: a broad-bladed assegai passes through his heart, the head falls back under water, a few crimson bubbles rise to the surface, and the finest bushbuck ram in the country-side is dead—my trophy is won.

We buried poor Jumbo under a cairn of stones by the bank of the stream, whose laughing waters will for ever chant his requiem. Spring eventually recovered, only to be killed later on by a leopard.

One of the largest bushbucks that I ever remember to have shot, and certainly the largest that I have ever measured, I secured in February 1893. I had upon several previous occasions seen a remarkably large ram in the vicinity; so, being anxious to bring him to bag, I saddled up Charlie, the "old moke," early one morning, as I had often done before, and rode out to the spot. It was upon the banks of the Waritshani river, just where a somewhat extensive kloof joins it at right angles—a very wide stretch of ground at the junction and on either side of the kloof being thickly covered with matted thorny scrub. When I reached the spot the sun was just up, the deeper kloofs still shrouded in damp shade; the higher ridges—upon which every leaf, every grass-blade, diamond-hung, sparkled with glittering dewdrops—shimmered in the level rays of light; while distant Kahlamba raised its sun-kissed peaks far above the snowy vapour-line that floated over its lower ridges and scarped precipices. Walking through scrub and grass at such a time is much like going through a river, except that in the latter case one gets honestly wet through at once, whereas in the former the showering dew creeps insidiously and coldly in till every rag on one is soaked, and at every step the boots squeeze water out and take

an equivalent quantity in. If perchance a buck gets up, you raise the rifle quickly, only to find a great glittering dewdrop on the "bead," and another in the V of the back-sight, and by the time these are brushed off the buck is out of sight. In such plight I was forcing my way through the bush, well up on the ridge; and when about in the centre of it a small reddish-brown object, close to a patch of bush about 400 yards distant across the river, attracted my attention. All the ground in this part across the Waritshani is very open, with only a few patches of scrubby bush scattered about at wide intervals. The slope faced the east, and the brilliant rays of the early sun lit up every stone and ant-heap; and after carefully watching the object which had attracted my attention, I came to the conclusion that it was neither of these, but a buck of some sort. I put it down as a duiker, and as I had failed to turn out the bushbuck which I specially sought, and wanted meat at the house for a tame lioness which I had, I made up my mind to go and try for a shot. Before moving forward, however, I took out my glasses to try and make certain of the nature of the beast, but in so doing clumsily let them fall; and not having a dry rag on me wherewith to wipe off the wet and sand with which they were covered, they were thenceforward practically useless to me. I at once started off down hill, leading my horse, and on nearing the edge of the scrub took another look, and to my surprise saw a grand old bushbuck ram standing on the spot where I had previously noticed the brown object. This latter had evidently been the ram's head and neck showing above the short grass in which he had been lying. When I caught sight of him, he was standing broadside, looking steadily in my direction, and I felt sure that he had at any rate made out the horse.

Everything now depended upon my disarming suspicion, and gaining the edge of the scrub in the angle below me and between the kloof and the river, unperceived. If I could succeed in doing this, a short stalk through the wet scrub, unpleasant but easy, would give me a pretty shot at about 180 yards. So I lay still for a quarter of an hour, during which time I indulged in a pipe of wet tobacco—which I only got alight after sacrificing a whole box of matches—for I felt awfully cold. All this time the old ram stood motionless, watching my horse attentively; but at

last he turned and moved forward towards the nearest patch of bush, some 12 or 15 yards distant; then, standing for an instant to take a final look around him, entered it and was lost to sight. Here was a fresh complication; for if he remained in the bush, even supposing I reached the edge of the cover, I should be unable to see him, and had neither boys nor dogs wherewith to dislodge him. The river, too, was in part flood, and would have been awkward to cross. But whilst I had been watching him, I had ample leisure to note his grand proportions, and had made up my mind that he was a trophy worth a lot of patience and perseverance to secure, and that it should not be for lack of either if I failed. In thinking over the situation, it seemed to me unlikely that he would lie up all day in so insignificant a patch, and so comparatively far away from the extensive and dense scrub on the river-bank. So that if I could only make my point in the angle below, and wait patiently, it seemed almost certain that sooner or later he would leave the patch and make for the river-bank, every step towards which would bring him within easier range.

As I believed the buck to be now lying down in the patch—seeing that he had been there fully twenty minutes and had made no sign—I thought it was unnecessary to go right round through the scrub, for though I should have been out of sight all the time, it would have taken me ever so much longer to reach the angle between the kloof and the river. Leaving my horse standing, I crouched very low and made a move forwards across the open ground between the two patches of scrub; but it was a very ill-judged proceeding, and but for a happy chance might have cost me the buck. Evidently he had been watching me all the time from the bush, himself unseen; and just as I neared the edge of the scrub, he jumped out from his cover and came bounding towards me, making for some safer retreat on the river-bank. There was no time for consideration; he had less than 200 yards to cover before reaching a place of safety; so putting up the 300 yards sight, I watched an opportunity as he turned nearly broad-side, to cross the head of a little washed-out *donga*, and taking low, fired. The loud “clop” of the bullet answered the shot, as with increased speed, but running very low and with that indescribable action called by the Boers *fijnig*, which is so well known

to all who have shot this buck, he entered the cover bordering the river.

I marked the spot well where I last saw the bushes waving, then catching my nag rode down to the river-bank. The current ran very swiftly, and I could not trust my old horse to cross, so left him, and, hunting about for a likely spot, selected the edge of a deep pool, across which ran a rocky bar some 4 feet under water. Although the river ran swiftly here, I felt sure of crossing if I could only keep my feet. Taking off my glasses, I waded in with all my things on: the rocks were fearfully slippery—once, twice, thrice I nearly fell; the fourth time my legs were fairly swept away from under me, my rifle fell into the pool on the upper side of the ridge of rocks, whilst I was carried over a low fall into a pool below, and for a few moments a looker-on might have had some fun, though he could only have guessed at my whereabouts by the rising bubbles. I soon swam to the bank, and threw my cartridge-belt ashore, and then again walked out along the rocks to try and recover my rifle. I found that it had slipped over the ledge and was in about 12 feet of water, so there was nothing for it but to strip everything off and dive for it. Time after time I went in, but it was not until the ninth attempt that I succeeded in collaring my precious weapon, the speed of the current making it anything but an easy task. By that time I was quite hungry and wet enough to think that some breakfast and a pipe of dry tobacco would not be amiss, so I again caught my horse and started back at once.

After I had taken my rifle to pieces, and put it in the sun to dry, and got outside of a substantial breakfast, I returned on foot with a friend who was staying with me, and two young Kafirs leading all the dogs. We crossed the river at another and better spot, though, being narrow, the current was very swift, and there were some choice stones in the river-bed over which we had to do penance barefooted. Little or nothing now remains to be told. We put the boys and dogs in at the upper end of the cover, whilst W—— and I guarded the bank above the spot where I believed the buck to be. A fine ewe got out at once, but we let her go free; nearer and nearer came the two lads beating, and at last I felt sure the ram lay dead, otherwise he would long ago have made a move. Then I noticed a movement in the scrub as

of a dog running forward, followed by others—a warning growl from No. 1, implying, "Get away, I found it first," then "Nansoke, i file!" ("There it is, dead!") On running down the bank to join the boys I found it was so; he had evidently fallen dead on the spot where we found him, my bullet having passed through both lungs. I now had time to examine my prize at leisure, and at once saw that my previously-formed opinion as to his size was fully justified. He measured in total length, over all, 5 feet 3 inches, height from heel to withers 36 inches, girth of neck behind the ears $17\frac{1}{2}$ inches, round the collar $24\frac{1}{2}$ inches. The horns only measured $13\frac{1}{2}$ inches and $13\frac{3}{8}$ inches, both being much worn and broken at the tips. There was no sign of a white stripe anywhere on the body, which was of a uniform deep red-brown colour, prettily spotted.

Perhaps the best of the fun was getting him back across the river. The first part of the performance, after cleaning him, was to send our spare clothes, weapons, &c., over in advance by the two boys. In a weak moment I surrendered my valuable W.R. double 12 rifle to the youngest, who was very anxious to take charge of it. Consequently, when he was about half-way across, I had the pleasure of seeing him stumble and disappear, carrying my rifle with him, and go sailing down the stream in fine style, the weight of the weapon dragging through the water alone retarding his quicker passage. But he emerged safely, and the two returned to help us through with the buck. Two struggling brown figures in front, a sodden blood-dripping carcass dragging behind them, with two struggling white figures at the hind-legs, and a boiling, hissing rush of water over all! Stumble, splash, recover, hang on, and "a bold little run at the very last pinch,"—thus we crossed, and laid down our burden upon the other bank, mutually satisfied.

The theme of bush-buck hunting is to me a most inspiring one, and did space admit, I could recount many tales of success and failure experienced in the pursuit of this game little antelope. But I will only say that the memory of the many hours of early morning through which I have wandered over the grassy ridges, stalked silently along the edges of dark kloofs, or penetrated their hushed solitudes, forced my way through the dew-laden cover by the banks of full-flooded rivers, or watched from some point

of vantage the rough slopes of bush-crowned kopjes in the hope of seeing the dark form of a wary old ram,—sometimes on cool, clear, brilliant mornings, when all nature awakens as with one accord to welcome the rising sun ; at others when all the land is shrouded in white fleecy mist, and hills, trees, and rocks assume gigantic shapes and sizes ; or again, when the ceaseless patter of the softly-falling rain from the low-hanging, leaden-hued clouds overhead is the only sound that disturbs the hushed quiet of the thirsty earth,—the memory of these days will ever be amongst the brightest of my sporting experience.

CHAPTER VII.

KODODO-HUNTING ON THE HILLS.

Description and habits—Resemblance to bushbuck—Bachelor clubs—Horn measurements—To memory dear—Sunrise over the Low Country—The Rij Kopjes—The “look-out”—Anticipate success—Rough stalking—Gone!—Suspense—Shooting under difficulties—The old bull falls—“Liya ’ku nona!”—Disturbed at his supper—Early morning—A fine bull—A treacherous spruit—Two alternatives—Through a thorn-bush—The big bull down—A stern chase—Against his better judgment—No choice—Good and bad luck—Luck turns—An exciting stalk—Disappointment—Perseverance rewarded.

THE koodoo is decidedly one of the most strikingly characteristic of the South African antelopes, and by many good sportsmen is considered to be the finest trophy of its kind that can be won with the rifle. Its range is very widely distributed over all parts of the country in which I have hunted, and in the district to which I now especially refer is still one of the commonest antelopes. In some places, of course, it has been entirely exterminated within the last thirteen or fourteen years, white and native hunters alike having found it an antelope all too easily brought to bag. The average height of a full-grown koodoo bull is 4 feet 10 inches, and of a cow 4 feet 6 or 7 inches. The largest bull I ever measured, shot on the Nguanetsi, stood 4 feet 11 inches at the withers. The colouring of these antelopes is remarkably effective, that of the young bulls and cows varying between a warm reddish grey and a paler silvery grey, the darker colour being more marked in the summer months. The old bulls, as is the case with elands, become of a dark slate-blue colour, owing to the scanty hair incompletely covering the skin underneath.

The hair of the face, especially down the frontal line, is more decidedly brown than upon the remainder of the body, and the upper part of the nose is black. The bulls have a slight semi-



Koodoo Bull (Strepsiceros kudu).

	Inches.
Length of horns in straight line, tip to base	44
Length of horns round the curve	58
Circumference at base	11
Width between tips	44

erectile mane down the back of the neck, and over the shoulders, where it is thickest; and a thick fringe of silver-grey hair depends from the chin and under part of the throat, forming quite an im-

posing beard: this becomes scanty and very pale in colour as the animal's age increases. Running transversely from the dorsal ridge, across the body, are several white stripes, from seven to



Koodoo Bull (Strepsiceros kudu).

	Inches.
Length of horns in straight line, tip to base	39
Length of horns round the curve	60
Circumference at base	10
Width between tips	7½

ten in number, some of which are double on the shoulders and flanks. There are two or three irregular white markings on the cheeks, and a white triangle below and between the eyes, its

apex forward: this in old specimens is frequently wanting. The bulls are heavily built, and run clumsily; the neck is massive, head very small and game-like, the ears large, full, rounded, and most sensitive. The hoofs are rather long, and particularly dainty in form, narrow and pointed, and unlike those of any other large antelope; they are not at all such as one would expect to see upon such a rock-loving antelope as the koodoo. The animal bears a very striking general resemblance to the bushbuck in appearance and habits: the spiral horns (though much longer and with a more exaggerated twist), the mane on the shoulders, black-tipped tail, rounded ears, dainty hoofs, triangular face-marks and spots, the striped body, together with its secretive bush-loving habits, its partiality for aromatic leaves and shrubs, and wild fruit, and even its very action when stalking slowly and majestically along, or moving off with heavy canter, remind one irresistibly of its smaller congener, the bushbuck.

Koodoo frequent rocky bush-covered hills—the rougher and more apparently inaccessible they are the better they like them; but in the Low Country they are equally at home in the heavy belts of bush which line the rivers and water-courses. As a rule, in the latter district they are fairly easy to run into on horseback, though individual bulls and the cows will display great speed and endurance; but in the hill country it requires much patience and care to successfully circumvent an old bull. Unfortunately for themselves, koodoo are of a most curious disposition, and seldom run far without standing and looking back at their pursuer. Their leaping powers are marvellous, and I have seen them clear obstacles 8 feet in height with apparent ease. Their sense of hearing is very acute—one needs only to look at the large, rounded, mobile ears to be satisfied upon that point; and I believe they trust more to that sense for their safety than to any other. Though almost invariably found in the near neighbourhood of water, I fancy they can go for a long time without drinking, judging by the extensive dry areas in which I have found them.

Koodoo keep together in small herds of from six to eight, though I have sometimes seen fourteen or more together, the

small troop consisting of one, or perhaps two, old bulls, a couple of young ones, and cows and calves. The bulls, however, frequently club together in small bachelor coteries; on one occasion I saw nine in a group, three of them being fine full-grown animals. From a distance of about 150 yards I watched them for nearly three hours; during part of the time a most interesting assault-at-arms was enacted for my benefit. The contestants were two of the largest bulls. They did not appear, however, to be very much in earnest, though one was eventually "knocked out" completely, and sent rolling over a bank 10 feet high. But he soon got up again, apparently none the worse either in body or mind for his signal defeat.

I think the old bulls will only be found gracing these bachelor meetings with their presence whilst the cows are in young; at other times pressing family matters occupy all their leisure. Koodoo are probably almost incapable of using their massive horns either for offence or defence; and though I have seen many koodoos brought to bay by dogs, I have never known an instance of one of the latter being wounded. They are wonderfully expert at getting through thick bush, where one would imagine their enormous horns would impede their progress; but they hold their nose straight out, lay their unwieldy ornaments back on the shoulders, and go at anything, facing obstacles at sight of which a mounted man would turn pale.

Koodoo horns vary very much in their general conformation, and it by no means follows that the largest bulls in point of size carry the best heads. Some horns, usually the most massive, have a very slow long-drawn spiral, and these usually attain great width between the tips. I have in my collection two pairs of koodoo horns measuring 44 inches between the tips, and one pair of 41½ inches. The thinner horns, usually giving great measurements over the spiral, are far less massive, and the tips are frequently very close together. The general effect, however, of these long, thin, quick-spiral horns is in my opinion far more striking than in the other case. One magnificent pair, which I secured in 1892, measure only 4½ inches between the middle bends, and 7½ inches

between the tips. The best three pairs of koodoo horns I have ever secured measure as follows:—

	Inches.
1. Length in straight line	44
Round curve	58
Circumference	11
Tip to tip	44
2. Length in straight line	44
Round curve	54
Circumference	10½
Tip to tip	41½
3. Length in straight line	39
Round curve	60
Circumference	10
Tip to tip	7½

Where is the South African sportsman whom the magic word “koodoo” fails to thrill with intense delight, and to whom it does not recall happy memories of glorious days spent under the clear winter skies of Natal, the Old Colony, the Transvaal, or Zululand?

Can you not, with keenest pleasure, call to mind how from your coign of vantage you watched the old blue bull, the patriarch of the herd, feeding in the cool of early morning on the edge of some dark thicket, with a group of six or eight timid large-eared cows? You remarked the quiet dignity with which he moved about, contenting himself with browsing very leisurely on some young leaves and shoots, at a fair distance from his harem, on whom, however, he kept a watchfully jealous eye; now and then standing and raising his grand head, the soft breeze toying the while with his silvery mane and beard, and the early sunlight flashing upon the bayonet-like points of his splendid horns, as with distended nostrils he sniffed the air suspiciously, and with keen bright eyes scanned the country around and beneath him. Then, satisfied by the security of his position, he stepped proudly forward, and slowly rubbed his great horns against a leafy bush, which scattered a shower of sparkling dew-drops over them, and again resumed his morning meal.

Or that other well-remembered day upon which you marked a grand old solitary bull—standing silent and motionless save for

the frequent twitching of the mobile ears—by a patch of dense cover on the rocky summit of a lofty hillside, when

“Morn, in the white wake of the morning star,
Came flooding all the Orient into gold.”

The damp mists rising from the low-lying flats roll up, and hang around the rocky bush-clad pinnacles, loth, as it were, to take their departure, even at command of the day-god, from a world so fair—even though to mount on fairy wings up, up, far beyond where yon aspiring eagle on tireless pinions sails in ever-widening circles in the cool clear air; up to a height at which our poor little world looks the insignificant thing that it really is, in the greater work of creation. There he stands, gazing with clear eyes over the network of kloofs, forests, and rivers, streams, ridges, and sand-belts, and drinking in with every breath the sweet morning air wafted to him across forests of acacia and many-scented shrubs. The set of the small head on the massive neck, the great crown of spiral horns, the self-conscious pride of birth, are indescribable, irresistible! However and wherever you have hunted him, whether on horseback or on foot, whether by deep ravines, by the bush-fringed banks of mighty rivers, by the

“Skirts of grey forest o’erhung with wild vines,”

or whether, pitting your own skill and knowledge against his innate wariness, you have fairly stalked him amongst his native hills—in all places, and under all circumstances, you will admit that he is a noble prize to bring to bag, a perfect king among antelopes!

Sunrise over the Low Country; the month, April—the South African autumn.

I have watched the sun as it rose red and angry over a heaving waste of grey waters, half hidden at times in the clouds of spray torn by the wild wind from the wave-crests, as our gallant ship, bound home round the Horn, reeled off her fifteen knots before a S.W. gale. I have watched it on a glorious morning in the early autumn—when, like a sleeping seabird, we lay-to off the Golden Gates—climbing up through the eastern sky, and flooding the Golden City of San Francisco with a glory not of earth; again amongst the coral islands of the South Seas, when, uprising from

old Ocean's bed, it has tinted sea and sky with hues outvying those of the rainbow itself, and so brilliant that the eye is dazzled as it looks. And I have wandered through the gloomy arches of the Australian bush, when its first rays have shot their points of light between the stems of waving tree-ferns and the trunks of the lofty gum-trees, beneath whose leafy shade the wallaby plays and nibbles the tender herbage, and the beautiful Banksian cockatoo wings its heavy flight to the deepest jungle. On each of these and many other occasions I have thought I have witnessed the perfection of beautiful sunrises, but I suppose each possessed its own individual charm and beauty, and comparisons are odious in Nature, if anywhere.

Certainly, on the lovely South African autumn morning of which I write, I sat and looked upon a scene than which no fairer could be. I had taken up my station at daylight on a huge granite boulder, some 40 feet down over the face of an irregular krantz, which I had reached from the higher ground by a somewhat break-neck descent—to wit, an old water-and-weather-worn fissure in the face of the krantz.

A heavy mist at first obscured everything, and I appeared to be gazing on a scene in Fairyland, where hills and valleys, mountains, cataracts, spires, domes, and minarets, followed one upon another in rapid succession, as the mist wreathed and curled and eddied around the foot of the krantzes. As the morn grew brighter, the fairy palaces were tinged with gold and carmine; then their shapes became less real, and at last floated away entirely from the lower land, leaving but a few gossamer-like shreds hanging over the tree-tops. Now watch the eastern sky. See how the clouds grow bright and brighter, brilliant, gorgeous—till at last, in a sea of gold and amber, up rises the god of day, and, as under the stroke of a magician's wand, the world breaks into new life; rocky krantz and bushy *donga* catch the golden beams, the shadows grow less, night-birds hurry silently to their hiding-places, bush-pigs, filled to repletion with succulent roots and the hapless Kafir's mealies, seek the dense jungle where they lie concealed during the day, and the keen-eyed little "dassies" (*hyrax*) scuttle up and down and squat around on the rocks and tree-trunks, warming themselves in the genial rays. Look! across yon patch of short sweet grass two bush-

buck are stealing silently, making for the cover in the next kloof. See how proudly the old black ram, stopping for an instant every now and then, throws back his head in an attitude of defiant watchfulness, proclaiming him the gallant but wary creature that he is. No lovers of broad daylight are they; they will content themselves with standing for an hour on the edge of the kloof, where the level rays can reach and warm them, and then they will silently retire to their "seats" in the densest cover they know of. And now the last shred of mist has vanished, and we gaze entranced upon the scene below. We stand upon a point 400 feet above a valley lying between two long ridges or spurs, the one covered along its whole length with dense bush, the other rough and irregular, cut up by *dongas*, and disclosing huge piled-up masses of granite, and alternate patches of bush and open jungle. About two and a half miles out on the flat the two spurs play out, the former tapering off into a series of little kopjes, and falling almost imperceptibly to the level of the flat, while the other ends boldly and abruptly in a bush-crowned krantz. The valley below is clothed in dense jungle, and a fair-sized stream runs through it, its course marked by the deeper green of the vegetation along its banks. As the eye ranges farther down the valley, the trees and jungle-grass grow thicker, though, softened by the distance, the country looks less rough. Farther out still, the long yellow grass-flats, ruddy with the autumn tints, and glittering with dew-drops in the morning sun, seem to wave in the soft cool air like the surface of a tropic sea under a gentle breeze.

Streams and gullies intersect the country in every direction as far as the foothills of yon strange kopjes—known locally as the Herring-bone Ridge, and by the Boers as the Rij Kopjes (from the fact of their running in an almost unbroken straight line)—where bush and grass-lands, ridges, slopes, and gullies—their inequalities softened or rendered almost invisible by distance—unite to form a carpet in diverse patterns of red, grey, brown, and yellow. This line of kopjes runs almost due east and west, starting from the foothills of the Kahlamba range, and stretches away to the Mehlamhali river, thirty miles distant. They have a most quaint and yet imposing appearance, starting up as they do from the comparatively level ground below, and piled up with

huge masses of granite and ironstone, and clothed from base to summit with dense evergreen bush, which annually defies even the raging grass-fires sweeping up their slopes, but which can only destroy the rank matted grass that everywhere grows to a great height. In shape these kopjes look more like giant dogs' teeth than aught else; and certainly "Dog-tooth Ridge" would have been equally as suggestive a name as any that it now bears.

In their cool retreats, damp, dark, and silent, the graceful koodoo and the solitary bushbuck love to hide, and rear their young; the ruthless hunting-dog curls himself up in the scrub thickets at their base; the beautiful leopard has its bone-strewn cave under the huge boulder upon which the shy active klip-springer bounds fearlessly, secure in its watchful agility. Huge baboons, savage and wary, mount guard upon the highest pinnacles, and hoarsely challenge all intruders upon their domains. The ungainly python and the terrible 'mamba find a home amongst the sheltering rocks; and dassies, genets, serval, weasels, and innumerable other vermin, glide through the cool dark bushes. Early sunlight and glowing colour are over all now, but at times, storms—terrible in their wild intensity—sweep over those jagged bush-crowned peaks; then the hissing, pelting rain falls from the low black clouds, foaming yellow torrents pour down through the wreck-strewn gorges, twisted flashes of lightning tear the sky above, and the ghastly blue glare penetrates to the darkest, gloomiest recesses of the rocks, while the thunder crashes and reverberates amongst the hills till they tremble to their bases. But now the soft breeze rustles tunelessly along their slopes, a cloudless sky spreads above them, and the risen sun gilds their weather-worn summits. Beyond the kopjes the high watershed of the Wareli river is just visible—a dark neutral-tinted shadow dancing and quivering in the morning haze.

It seems almost desecration to light one's pipe in such a place; but habit is a hard taskmaster, so laying my rifle across my knees, I proceeded to fill and light up, as the wind is blowing from the valley towards me, and can thus carry no tell-tale scent to the keen organs of the watchful game. And whilst admiring the grand panorama spread out below, every likely spot has been scanned eagerly for a glimpse of the game sought. A wary fellow that

old bull, and uncommonly chary of courting admiration from others than members of his harem! Every day for a fortnight I had taken up my post by dawn on the high krantz overlooking the feeding-ground of this troop of koodoo, about two miles distant from my house; but though I had frequently seen some of them, and on one occasion bagged a fair bull with a long standing shot at 300 yards, only twice had the old bull of the herd shown himself. A patriarchal old fellow he was, whose horns I was more than ever determined to add to my collection; but on each occasion he had been far out of range, and feeding along in such a manner that, taking into consideration the difficulties presented by the ground, and the close proximity of dense bush, it was almost impossible to stalk him successfully, except by getting over the face of a krantz, the sight of which would have turned a baboon pale. This was now the second occasion upon which he had showed himself, and was to be the last time that I had to watch from that spot. As I returned home to breakfast something whispered that success was near and certain, and this took the edge off my present disappointment.

The following morning, Tuesday, broke fine, but with thick mist-clouds flying about. Contrary to custom, I overslept myself this day, and it wanted barely forty minutes to sun-up when a loud knock at the door, and a voice calling "Vuka, baas, ku sile" ("Get up, sir, it's daylight"), aroused me from sleep and dreams of the happy hunting-grounds. I quickly got my rifle and cartridges together, giving them to a boy, with instructions to go on at once and have a look for the koodoo. I merely waited to have a tub and swallow a cup of hot coffee (habit again), then calling up two of my dogs, Rover and Lion, followed the boy at my best pace. The sun, however, was already up, though shining in a very half-hearted manner through a bank of white mist, as I hastily climbed the hill overlooking the valley whose every feature I now knew so well. Just on top I met my boy coming cautiously towards me, and could see by the broad grin stretching across his sable countenance from here to yonder, that he had good news to tell. In a few words he informed me that, strangely enough, he had caught sight of the bull immediately upon reaching the "look-out," and that it was feeding alone over a low ridge right under the hill, and

making for a kloof over the next spur, a spot where hitherto we had never seen him. He said he had considerable difficulty in retracing his steps unseen, but assured me the animal had not been alarmed. Giving the dogs over in charge to the boy, I took my rifle and cartridge-belt, and at once prepared for action. Barring accidents, it seemed not improbable that we should return home carrying the head and horns of the old bull; but as I unfortunately had a nasty cold and a most confoundedly stiff neck, perhaps the chances were not altogether in my favour, seeing that when on such a quest silence is imperative. We proceeded as expeditiously as possible, skirting the hill out of sight in order to reach a deep kloof on its northern slope by which we could get down on to the spur where the bull was last seen. I did not venture upon another look, as in the event of the bull having reached this spur—which was very open—he must have seen me immediately I showed my head over the rocks. We clambered down through the kloof, where the greatest care was necessary to avoid starting stones rolling and cracking dry branches, and in twenty minutes reached the bottom: thence we worked our way through a couple of hundred yards of drenching cover, behind a low ridge, and at length reached the upper end of the spur on which we hoped to find the bull.

After carefully wiping the dew from my rifle-sights, I crept to a large stone, and inch by inch raised my hatless head over the top: I could see right away down to the end of the spur—the bull was gone! One chance remained, but it necessitated instant action. It was just possible the bull might have turned back into the kloof on our left, where he would quickly get our wind, and would lose no time in climbing out of the opposite hill, when I might be able to get a shot at him. That he was not far off was evident from the eager excitement of the dogs, which pulled like furies at their riems, and gave the boy all he could do to hold them. Stooping low, we quickly made our way down the spur, through the long wet grass, but had not covered 100 yards when a heavy rush in the bush on our left apprised us that the game was afoot. There was not a moment to lose. Telling the boy to hang on to the dogs as he valued his life, and to follow me as quickly as possible, I ran off at top-speed down the ridge, till I reached a spot which commanded the only two probable

ways of escape for the bull. One of these was by the thick bush at the top of the adjoining ridge, 200 yards distant; the other by the more open ground lower down the kloof, to be reached by crossing through some low thick scrub little more than 100 yards from where I stood. Cornered at last, by Jove! I had scarcely reached this spot when to my surprise, for we had both believed the bull to be alone, three cows with calves ran out at the lower end, halted for an instant in the open, then quietly cantered off along the hillside, whilst I followed them as they ran, with my rifle aligned. How I wished then that the old bull might follow in their tracks! It was barely 120 yards, and nothing but a miss-fire would have saved him! Silently I waited, though in agony for want of a good sneeze; another cow followed, taking the same direction as the previous ones; then two more ran out of the opposite hill, both of which stood for some seconds at about 200 yards, with their large ears inclined forward to catch any sound warning them of the whereabouts of the danger they knew was imminent, and with their pretty, striped grey sides shining like silver in the full blaze of the morning sun.

But it had to come at last: two pent-up sneezes which had gathered force by confinement very quickly sent the cows off over the ridge; and instinctively I turned towards the hill, for I knew that the bull would not rashly court the danger that such unwonted sounds threatened him with. For a moment I feared that after all he had outwitted us in some way, but all doubts were quickly dispelled as I heard his heavy tread in the thickest part of the bush; then he started climbing out of the hill, and though still hidden by the trees, I knew that he must soon come into sight. Then followed a loud crashing sound as he burst through the thick jungle on the edge of the bush, and I felt that a few minutes more would decide his fate. It was an anxious moment. I had raised the 200-yard sight, intending to try and get my shot in as he passed through a narrow opening amongst the trees, where I had seen two of the cows emerge, in whose tracks he appeared to be following. "Nansiya!" ("There he is!") whispered the boy excitedly, as he crouched at my side, and we could see the tips of the black horns above the bushes. Getting an extra wrench at my neck, which somehow felt stiffer than ever at that moment, I got my cheek down on the stock,

and as the head and shoulders of the bull appeared in the narrow open space, I took carefully a hand's-breadth in front of him and pressed the trigger. Kloof and krantz echoed the report, a dull "clop," a crashing and swaying of bushes, and I knew that the old bull was mine at last. We quickly slipped the dogs, and were about to follow them, when right on top of the hill appeared another bull, standing with only his hind-quarters and horn-tips visible. Another wrench, and taking a coarse sight—as he was 250 yards away—I fired. A large branch cut off just over his back and a whistling bullet hurried his departure and proclaimed my failure. However, I was well satisfied, for the old bull lay dead in the bush above, and, after all, one could scarcely expect under the circumstances to make a decent shot. "Liya 'ku nona!" ("It will get fat"), as the natives say. A rough scramble through the kloof, up the hill, and a few yards into the jungle outside, brought us to where the dogs were standing over the dead bull, licking the blood as it flowed from the bullet-hole at the junction of the massive neck and shoulder. Unfortunately we discovered that one horn was broken off about 7 inches from the tip, the perfect one only measuring 38 inches from base to tip, and 49½ inches round the curve. He was very old, his body nearly hairless and covered with innumerable scars. Thus died the old bull, and it was not the least satisfactory part of the performance to know that in future I could conscientiously keep my blankets warm a little longer of a morning.

On one occasion a few years ago (November 1, 1888) I was riding to a Kafir kraal some twenty-five miles distant, and having started late in the afternoon, had to push on as fast as possible to save daylight. After I had got up a somewhat steep hill, a considerable stretch of ground, covered with low thick scrub, lay before me, where the never-too-distinct winding Kafir footpath which I had been following hitherto was completely lost; but as I had often ridden over the ground, I had made a tolerably plain track through the scrub along which by daylight a horse might canter. But somehow in the fading light I lost my reckoning, and found that I was too low down towards a large stony kloof which lay to my left. I turned my horse's head up the hill again to try and cut the track, when I heard a slight rustling in the scrub. Glancing down in the direction whence the sound appeared to

have come, and apparently almost under my feet, I at once caught sight of some animal a few paces from the horse, but the latter was so restless and uneasy he would not stand. I tried to get my rifle round and to my shoulder, but ere I could do so a large cheeta sprang out of the grass and dashed away down the hillside at a great rate, to judge by the crashing sound of the scrub which marked his course. I knew it was useless to look any farther for the brute in the fast-fading light, so I got off my horse and walked to the spot from which he jumped up, thinking perhaps there might be another skulking in the long cover. But all I could discover were the half-eaten remains of a duiker ewe, upon which the cheeta had been feeding when disturbed by me. I left the buck where it lay, intending to get up early next morning and try for a shot; and after tying a bunch of grass on a high bush to mark the spot, rode away.

Next morning I was up early enough, for the sun had not risen when I rode down towards a broad stream, which ran with many a bend and curve at the bottom of the ridge upon which I had seen the cheeta on the previous day. I was riding slowly, looking around me, and scanning the long extent of bush-covered hillside which lay ahead, when I noticed some large objects moving about through thick clumps of bush on the far ridge. Immediately below the spot at which I usually crossed the stream above mentioned, two other smaller ones ran together from another ridge to join it—these two taking their rise about 800 yards from one another, each being broad, and with well-wooded banks to about half-way down the hillside. Higher up they formed three converging ridges or spurs covered with thick scrub, upon the westernmost of which I had disturbed the cheeta at his supper on the previous evening, and on the most distant spur were the objects which had attracted my attention. Looking at them carefully with my glasses, I made them out to be a small troop of nine koodoo, two of which were good bulls. Of course I gave up all idea of going after the cheeta, which, besides being but a poor trophy if bagged, was very much a "bird in the bush." I dismounted and fixed my attention upon the koodoo, which were about three-quarters of a mile distant, feeling that it would be quite useless to attempt to stalk them in the position they then held; and the country was too close to give me a chance

of running into them on horseback. There was but little probability of their remaining there after sun-up; they would most likely move off to one or other of the thousand and one kloofs which surrounded them on all sides. Taking everything into consideration, I preferred to play a waiting game, and give them first move. Half an hour later the opposite ridge became golden-tinted, the dew-drops caught the glowing splendour, and glittered pearl-like upon every trembling leaf and grass-blade. The low-toned murmurings of awakening life heard at early dawn gave place to a glad chant of welcome as the glorious sun climbed by golden steps to its throne; voices sounded clear from a Kafir kraal on a distant ridge, where the lads were busy milking the full-uddered cattle, and the girls running blithely to and from the stream with water, singing gaily the while. Already the sounds have reached the ears of the wary antelopes, and they quickly prepared for a move to safer quarters. Three or four cows and a well-grown calf ran out first, and, cantering a little way, pulled up and stood listlessly in the low damp scrub, gazing around them, every now and then licking their flanks and scratching their ears with their hind-feet. The other cows soon followed them, accompanied by a fine bull, carrying a heavy pair of wide-set horns. This one at once took the lead, and the little group started off at an easy canter across the ridge, heading for one of the converging spruits before mentioned. I could see nothing of the other bull, and not until the troop was a couple of hundred yards from the bush did he canter heavily out, and hurry to re-join his companions. It did not take me long to discover that he was a splendid brute; at a glance I took in his noble proportions, and spiral horns of more than average length. By the exercise of a little judgment it seemed quite possible to bag both these fine bulls; the great difficulty appeared to be to keep them in sight in all the long cover and bush they would have to pass through before they reached a spot at which I should have a chance of cutting them off. Having taken up a hole in my girths while waiting, I was soon stretching out along the slope of the ridge at a slinging canter, it being absolutely necessary to reach the usual drift to enable the horse to cross, for I had no desire to get bogged, as I certainly should have done by trying elsewhere—the stream, owing to the mud of which its bed consisted, being prac-

tically impassable except at the drift. Once through on the other side, the rising ground opposite was quickly gained, and on the top I pulled up to have a look round and give my nag a blow. The koodoo were nowhere in sight, so believing they had turned up one of the branch kloofs, and were making for some extensive bush on the far side of the opposite ridge, I galloped round to try and intercept them, and very nearly lost my chance thereby. Upon reaching the spot where on the previous evening the cheeta had started up, I happened to glance back over the ridge behind, just in time to see one of the koodoo enter a small patch of bush near the middle kloof. It was but a momentary glimpse, but I saw the mistake I was making, as they evidently had no intention of climbing out of the ridge, but were making for the extensive stony kloof in which the cheeta had disappeared.

Very carefully I now examined the spot with the aid of my field-glasses, and in a few moments distinctly made out the koodoo passing through some thick bush in a direct line for the kloof. This was my chance: I knew the ground, and that it was impossible for the koodoo to get down over the waterfall at the lower end of the bush in which they then were. They had but two alternatives—either to run out to the right, and go back up the ridge from which they had originally started, or else to come out on the left towards me, and, crossing the point of the middle spur, enter another extensive bush along the edge of which I was riding, and in which, once they gained its shelter, there would be but little chance of my seeing them again, having no boys at hand to dislodge them. Anyway it was apparent that at all costs the point of the spur on which I then stood must be reached, as it was the only place offering a chance of a shot, and once gained, it commanded a very fair extent of ground within easy range. But a very awkward barrier of densely matted and thorny bush interposed between me and the point I would reach. Under such circumstances, however, one does not hesitate—down with your head, up with your bridle-arm across your face, in with the spurs, and “go for it”! You probably get hooked up for a second by the lobe of the ear, tear your nose a little, and the back out of your shirt; but what are the odds? Such things don’t count with a grand bull koodoo in front of you. And so it was with me; torn, but still whole, I got through somehow, and dis-

mounted in a comparatively open spot. Large boulders, hidden in the long grass, lay scattered about here and there, and as I was scrambling over these in order to reach a large flat rock lower down the spur, and vigorously anathematising such irregularities on the part of nature, I heard the koodoo clattering along amongst the stones in the kloof below. They were then just above the waterfall, and another moment would decide one way or another. A brief pause as they halt at the edge of the thin strip,—the branches wave and part,—and the two bulls break out on my side, leaping with great bounds over the rock-strewn ground, their long spiral horns laid well back, and their soft grey, white-striped hides, now darkly wet with the dew from the grass and trees, shining brightly in the slanting rays of the morning sun. They looked grand, indeed, under these circumstances, but I had little time for admiration, I coveted possession too keenly. I picked out the largest head at once, and noted that the horns were very close set, as with one foot raised on a convenient rock affording a fine rest, I took at the shoulder of this bull—which was running slightly behind and lower down the ridge than the other—and pressed the trigger. A loud “clap” answered the report, and the great bull leapt high into the air and fell forward on to his head: a brief interval, and the stricken animal raises himself again, struggling to regain his feet; but the next shot catching him from above and behind, down through the shoulders, drops him dead while yet the sound of the report rings in my ears.

At the first shot the other bull turned short up the hill, making straight away for the top of the ridge. I fired at him ere he reached the summit, but missed—short. As he gained the top he turned and stood broadside, offering a splendid shot against the dark background of bush. He moved slightly just as I was about to fire, and I pulled too hurriedly, catching him far back through the ribs. He was over the rise before I could get another cartridge in, so I ran back to my horse, who pricked his ears and glanced behind him as though he meditated putting a stop to all the galloping about by bolting, but that he feared getting hooked up in the thorny bush, of which he still retained a lively recollection. Once again in the saddle, and clear of that infernal bush, I raced as hard as I could along the side of the

spur, running almost on top of a fine large reedbuck ram in a patch of scrub: he moved lazily off, as though he knew he was free from molestation. The kloof below ran a long way into the hill, and as there was no possible chance of crossing through, the longest way round was the shortest way there, and I had to go right away past the head of it. When I reached the ridge over which the bull had disappeared, I could not make him out anywhere, so I cantered over, intending to try down the next kloof, over the ridge. A well-worn Kafir footpath ran along this spur, and glancing to my left I saw some boys standing grouped together upon it, who, as soon as I appeared in sight, called to me excitedly. As I rode up they pointed out the spoor of the wounded bull, with a good deal of blood upon it, and stated they had seen him come over the ridge, evidently making for the large bush, some miles in extent, which covered the one side of the hill opposite; but fortunately for me, he had seen the boys, and at once turned short off, and kept away down a small gully on the left. I very easily secured the boys' services, and told them to hold the spoor, whilst I galloped on ahead in the direction taken by the bull, to see if I could come up with him. I rode a good way round without seeing any sign of him—indeed it seemed most unlikely that he would have kept long to the open country, when there were so many well-wooded kloofs and gullies about in which he could take shelter. The boys came quickly along upon the spoor, so I soon rejoined them and walked my horse quietly alongside. The old bull had not let the grass grow under his feet: he had made straight down the spur at a hard gallop, and did not appear to have halted or even slackened speed anywhere. On approaching a considerable stream, fully three miles from the spot whence he started, he had turned off down a gully, in which was some very thick cover, with a dark grove of *'mngcosi* trees at its lower end. I thought it as well to canter on ahead again here, in case he should be lying up in it, but almost immediately struck his spoor on the other side: he had gone through without a check. Within a few hundred yards we felt sure we should know what were our chances of getting him, as the river ran close by, and if he had crossed it, the probability would be he was making for another very extensive bush, some two miles distant across the ridge on the other side,

and out of which we could never hope to turn him. If he had not crossed, he must have turned up stream towards a patch of bush I knew of, just beyond which were a number of Kafir kraals: past these it was most unlikely he would attempt to go. Sure enough, on the bank of the stream he had stopped, probably debating in his mind the advisability of crossing. Poor brute! weakened by his wound, he had to decide against his better judgment, and trust to what he must have felt sure was far from a secure haven of refuge. We took the spoor away up the banks of the stream, till we reached the edge of the strip of bush beyond which lay the kraals. Here I made the boys stand, whilst I rode round the bush, intending to cross the muddy stream and get over to the opposite side, whilst the boys entered the cover on the spoor. I had scarcely reached the head of the bush, and was searching for a crossing-place, when a bushbuck jumped out of the reeds, got through, and entered the strip of bush on the other side. Almost immediately I heard a shout, "Nansi, nans' itshongonono, li pumile!" ("There's the koodoo, he's run out!") Done, by the mischief! Gathering up the reins, I turned the horse into the reeds. It was a wretched place to cross, but there was no choice: in we went, the poor brute sinking up to the girths in mud and splashing me thoroughly from head to foot. How he struggled through I do not know, but as soon as ever I could get a footing I slipped off and assisted him out, then jumping in the saddle again, I let him out as much as possible. It was slightly up-hill, splendid going, and I very soon sighted the koodoo, cantering steadily on at a fair pace, and evidently making for the large bush which he could have gained in the first instance had he crossed the stream where he first struck it, instead of turning up towards the cover out of which we had started him.

It meant "lost buck" if he reached it; but his chance of so doing was a very small one, though he had so long a start. My old shooting-horse had seen him from the first, and is now making the turf fly behind him in his eagerness to come up with the game, and I took advantage of the few spare moments to wipe some of the thick black mud from my eyes, and from the breech-action and sights of my rifle. And now the koodoo runs a little wide, and turning slightly, glances round, as if he felt the hill too

much for him, and would fain come to a stand; then, seeming to hear the thud of hoofs behind him for the first time, he starts suddenly, lays his great horns back, and springs forward for 100 yards with redoubled speed. But the effort is his last: his grey sides are streaked with blood; a thick froth, red-tinged, flies from his mouth; he gradually slackens speed, running very unevenly; and as I race my horse abreast and a little wide of him, to obtain a broadside shot, and jump down, the stricken animal stands at once, looking full at me. The shot that rings out is a merciful one, far more so than was the first fired: for an instant the bull stands staggeringly, then his legs fail him, and he falls heavily—dead.

Both pairs of horns were of more than average length, those of the first bull killed being very handsome, measuring 42 inches in a straight line from base to tip, $53\frac{1}{2}$ inches over the keel, with only 18 inches between the tips. They were in very perfect condition, with long straw-coloured tips. The second bull carried a very heavy massive pair, wide set, with blunted tips and rough gnarled bases; 41 inches in a straight line, 50 inches over the keel, and 41 inches between the tips—a great spread.

I secured a fine bull also on another occasion, under very fortunate circumstances, and by mere chance as it were—enjoying a very exciting bit of stalking before I bagged him. It was on March 21, 1889, and at a spot about three miles from my house. I had been out all the afternoon on the chance of getting a head of small game, scarcely venturing to hope for anything as large as even reedbuck or bushbuck; but it was an “off-day,” and I was out of form, for I had missed two duikers and lost a fine chance at a bushbuck. The Fates, however, probably seeing how philosophically I bore their frowns, at last condescended to smile on me. As there still wanted over two hours to sundown, I struck over a high ridge towards a spot where a number of rough broken kloofs terminated abruptly in a long irregular krantz fully 80 feet above the level of the plain below. A long open spur ran off from the ridge, stretching away out like a giant arm over the bush-covered flats surrounding its base.

Bush leopards were still very numerous, though seldom seen; still I had every confidence that I should bring something or

other to bag before returning homewards. After hunting about a little, a duiker got up from a patch of scrub, behind and under cover of which it got over into the next gully without giving me a shot. However, I hurried over in his tracks, hoping to catch sight of him going out of the next ridge; but not seeing him, I walked to the edge of the krantz, to ascertain if by any chance he could have got over. Whilst looking round, my eyes chanced to rest upon an object about two-thirds of the way down the long open spur before alluded to, moving about amongst the large boulders and low scrubby bush; but losing sight of it again for an instant, and not having glasses with me, it was some time before I could pick it up again. But by dint of very careful watching I at last made it out, and after looking steadily at it for a few moments, decided that it was a koodoo bull, though the distance was too great to enable me to decide upon his size. He was moving slowly down the spur, in a direction that would take him to a very extensive bush at its base, on the north side; and I believed that by careful stalking I could bring him to bag, always provided he did not leave the spur and enter the bush before I reached the spot. True, the wind was not all that could be desired, as its direction was such that to approach from above was impossible: he would have been a mile away before I was half-way down the krantz. The only course open to me was to go along the krantz till I reached a kloof by which descent would be possible, and then crossing a high intervening ridge, and two more or less wooded gullies, reach the upper end of the bush, towards which he was heading, and trust for the rest to the kind fates which had given me the chance.

Everything in this instance depended upon prompt action, and where one has to act hurriedly stalking loses half its charm. Half an hour passed before I reached the high ridge which lay between the big bush and the last of the two smaller ones which I had successfully negotiated. This was the most ticklish part of the stalk: it was absolutely necessary that I should confirm my reckoning as to the bull's whereabouts, which I certainly could not do by keeping low down on the ridge, as the tops of large trees shut out the view; and by keeping well up, in addition to the risk of being seen in the glare of the setting sun, which was now on the horizon, I found the wind very shifty, the krantz above

causing any number of eddies, which appeared to come from all points of the compass at once. Still, "nothing venture, nothing win"; so assuming the position but not the garb of the serpent, I cautiously wriggled myself along to the summit of the ridge, keeping as high up as seemed compatible with safety. I saw the koodoo at once, standing amongst some low bush, and gazing very intently towards a Kafir kraal some distance down the valley, and from which came the usual amount of noisy whistling as the lowing cattle were driven homewards, the distant sound of chopping wood, and the bleating of the goats. The bull was not a large one apparently, at least he seemed full-grown in point of size, but carried a small head: however, I wanted meat, and so dismissing the thoughts of a trophy as well, with a feeling of disappointment, I continued my stalk with the less worthy, if more necessary, object in view. I felt very sure now of getting a shot, as the bull was only about 600 yards away, and once the head of the big bush was gained I should be less than 200 yards from the present position of the bull. I got down into the kloof successfully, keeping as high up as I dared, and had to be most careful in ascending the opposite side, as the ground was littered with dead leaves and sticks, and creepers barred one's progress at every few yards; and I had no means of ascertaining whether the koodoo was any nearer to me than when last seen. The top of the bank gained, it was only 100 yards to the bush, which I reached under cover of the trees and fast-approaching gloom. Then creeping cautiously from rock to rock, I ascended the spur on which I had seen the bull, with my eyes strained almost painfully to make him out before being myself discovered. Halting at last by a low bushy tree which afforded good cover, I had a look round, listening carefully the while for any sound which should guide me in determining the position of the game. I had last seen the bull about 150 yards from this tree; if they had moved down the ridge, they had my wind and were now—anywhere: but I held on to my luck tenaciously. Nothing—not so much as a little dassie—could I see! It was getting dark now, but still feeling confident the game was close at hand and had not winded me, nor as yet entered the bush, I quickly slipped off my boots, and again moved on. A moment afterwards I saw a dark object higher up the ridge, and as it was well above wind,

I crept towards it. Once, twice, I looked up; the third time, less than 30 yards separated me from two large koodoo cows, which had moved out from behind some rocks, and stood staring straight at me. They made no attempt to move on, and I do not think they had properly made me out. I felt sure the bull was close at hand, so without moving from the spot I quietly cocked my rifle and waited. One of the cows turned and looked towards a great pile of rocks, from behind which next instant came a koodoo bull, and, passing me about 100 yards off, bounded away down the kloof followed by the cows. I knew I had missed when I pulled the trigger, for I felt I was not "on" him. Angry and sorely disappointed, I turned to retrace my steps and pick up my boots, when a loud clattering sounded amongst the stones behind me, and looking round I saw a magnificent old bull cantering steadily down the hill after the others, and about the same distance off as was the younger bull when I fired. I waited till he was abreast of me, and this time knew that I *was* "on." The range was too close for me to hear the "clap" of the bullet, but he lurched forward, recovered, and the wild rush he made towards the bush did not deceive me. As I ran forward a loud thud of a falling body amongst the rocks below told its tale of success, and in a few minutes I was standing over my fairly-earned prize. The bull was shot through the heart, no doubt a "fluke," but a most lucky one, whether or not.

His horns were heavy and wide spread, and the tips much worn. They measured 39 inches in a straight line, 49 inches over the curve, and 38 inches between the tips.

I was not sorry, after all, that I had missed the smaller bull and refrained from firing at the cows. These latter must either have been lying down amongst the rocks, or more probably feeding about on the edge of the bush out of sight, when I first saw the bull. But which of the two bulls was the one I had first marked from the krantz above, it was hard to determine.

Thus it often happens in shooting, that what may reasonably be expected to turn out a blank day—when there only remain two hours before sundown and nothing has been bagged—belies its promise and is crowned with unlooked-for success before its close.

CHAPTER VIII.

BUFFALO-HUNTING.

Present distribution—A charge in cover—Hunting-party planned—An opportunity missed—Not attending to orders—Break through the line of beaters—Dense bush—The buffalo headed—Only two ways of escape—A dash for freedom—An awkward predicament—Stopping a charge—Leg-bail—A bull down—Following the cow's spoor—A heavy storm—Failure—Horn measurements of bush-buffalo—Comparisons—An unexpected meeting—Close quarters—Nguanetsi behaves pluckily—A splendid bull—Rough country—Our beaters—A believer in predestination—The beat commences—Danger of moving about during a beat—"Ti pumile!"—Splendid panorama—"Excelsior!"—A stiff climb—The game afoot—At bay—A determined charge—Bedlam—Buckshot for buffalo—Trophies.

As space will scarcely permit of any description of the chase of this grand animal in the bush-veldt, where indeed it can no longer be said to exist as an object of sport—at any rate in such portion of the Low Country as lies between the Khalamba foothills and the Libombo, of which alone I desire to treat—I must take this opportunity of showing how an occasional day after buffalo can be obtained very close to the Kahlamba range, and without going very far from home. There is not the slightest doubt that, but for the inertness of the Transvaal Government, buffalos would still exist in considerable numbers, not only in the deep kloofs at the foot of the range itself, but also in the wide extent of "fly"-infested bush-veldt bordering on the Libombo range. But not until the game was already practically exterminated was any law passed to restrict the shooting; and even then to the poor buffalo was extended but little protection,

for it was enacted that by the payment of £10 for a licence they could be shot practically *ad lib.*—elephants and hippopotami alone being secured from molestation, not only by the law, but by the fact that there are not many dozens of either left in the State to shoot.¹ Such short-sightedness is not only careless, but actually culpable. I can well remember how fourteen years ago the eastern portion of the Transvaal was a perfect paradise for big game of all descriptions—elephant, rhinoceros, hippopotami, buffalo, giraffe, eland, roan and sable antelope, and in fact all the species of antelope peculiar to those regions. Now, alas! we speak of all these animals, with the exception of the giraffe and sable antelope, as we do of the deinotherium, megatherium, and the dodo,—things that *have* been. There are still a few spots where buffalo may be obtained in very limited numbers—such as the dense bush along the Sabi river, a few kloofs at the foot of the Kahlamba, and in some stretches of country here and there along the upper Limpopo. High up on the Sabi river, where it passes through the rough foothills of the Berg, are numerous deep dark kloofs of great extent, wherein troops of buffalo—or elephant either, for that matter—might wander in perfect security; for no one ever attempts to go into such places except on occasions when a beat is organised for driving buffalo. So it is very seldom the animals get disturbed, and, if care is taken, the preserve may eventually prove invaluable.

Some years ago (January 1891) I had a very good day's sport in the bush on the south side of a river known locally as the 'Mtitsi, on which occasion I was accompanied by two friends, and when I had a very narrow escape from a nasty accident. I would here say that, owing to the nature of the bush, there are only two ways of getting a shot at these animals. One, and in my opinion far the best, is to take up the fresh spoor from the spot where they have been grazing during the night and follow it, with but one boy and perhaps a couple of dogs, into the bush. If strict silence be observed, and ordinary precaution as to direction of wind be taken, an easy shot may be thus obtained. I one day bagged a very fine bull in this way, dropping him dead with a single shot; but his companions, six in number, not

¹ The game law has now been revised, and—when too late—buffalo-shooting has been prohibited.

realising from what direction the shot came, charged down on us, and but for the welcome shelter afforded by a particularly dense patch of bush, and the stems of some fine yellow-wood trees, it would have fared badly with us on that occasion. Of course, in the district of which I write, a horse is almost useless, as even when passing from cover to cover the distance is so short, and the ground everywhere so very rough, that a horse could not get anywhere near them before they reached another safe retreat. Naturally the buffalo stands a far better chance of escape under these circumstances, for on the flats, when once they are ridden out of any dense bush in which they may have been found, a horse gallops into them quickly, and they are easily shot. In the bush it is difficult to avoid a charge, for a buffalo once started is a very awkward beast to stop, and the united charge down of a number of them is irresistible.

As I had secured the services of a number of natives living at kraals several miles apart from one another, the various parties turned up on the appointed day in straggling bands. We had gone over the previous afternoon—W—— and I on horseback, and P—— accompanying the Scotch cart. We camped on the top of a high ridge distant some six miles from the bush we intended to hunt. The next morning we took the cart down to a spot much nearer the scene of action, and ourselves accompanied the crowd of Kafirs to the banks of the river. A party of spoorers had left some two hours before us to try and find out the exact bush in which the buffalo then were. These ascertained that a small group of them had crossed the river during the night, and were in a detached kloof where, had we known of their presence, they could not possibly have escaped us. Unfortunately, before the spoorers discovered that the buffalo had come through the river, they walked almost on top of them in this small kloof. They started at once, rushed down the ridge to the river, which they recrossed, and, keeping in the scrub along the bank, entered the big bush at the lower end. W—— and I were on horseback, and reached the top of the ridge just when the buffalo were crossing the river. The first intimation we received of the game being afoot was the loud shouting of the Kafirs, whom we could make out running hard down the river-bank. Unfortunately I found that it was impossible to get

my horse down the ridge towards the river, as it consisted of great boulders and thick scrub, over and through which it would have been suicidal to take a horse. Thinking it possible, however, that the buffalo might attempt to go out of the bush and climb the high ridge, by means of which they could cross over into the deep kloof on the other side, I galloped hard down towards the end of the ridge, over the worst possible ground, hoping to be able to cut them off at the end of the bush should they attempt it. Before I was abreast of where it was possible the buffalo might break cover, I heard shouts from the Kafirs who had crossed the river, then other shouts higher up the ridge; and one after another I saw their dusky forms appear on the spur, above and below the bush, and knew at once that they had out-flanked the buffalo, and at least prevented them from getting out of the kloof. I dismounted here to study the situation, as I knew there was now no need for me to hurry. The buffalo were certainly in the kloof, most probably standing in a deep and extensive hollow in the hillside, where the bush was even thicker than elsewhere. If the beaters again moved them, supposing a sufficient number to outflank them and prevent them breaking through their ranks, they would most certainly move up straight through the thickest part of the bush that they could find; and as its extent higher up was so great that nothing less than 200 Kafirs could have beaten it, it was necessary to place a line of men across the narrowest path, at a spot some half a mile higher up, and where it was not more than 500 yards across. I now instructed my gun-bearer, who came up, to tell one of the Kafirs to get about twenty of their number to form an extended line across this narrow neck, whilst ten were to place themselves in a line extending from the bush to the river-bank, and at right angles to the course of the river itself. Another messenger was to convey word to all the beaters who still remained in the centre of the kloof to come out and go in again at the far end at a given signal. I posted my friends *pro tem*. 500 yards distant from each other along the line of the river, on the side on which I stood, as they could better decide upon their future movements after the buffalo were started; for I thought it just possible that when they moved off they might endeavour to recross the river on to our side, and make for a long irregular strip of bush which

ran up past the spot on which I then stood. I remained where I was until my gun-bearer rejoined me; and when half an hour had elapsed, and I thought all the positions properly occupied as I had selected, I signalled to the Kafirs across on the other side, about 500 yards distant, to enter the bush and drive up.

We waited for a long time before hearing anything of or from the beaters. They had entered the bush and were searching for spoor, as it was all-important that their line should keep well together, and thoroughly hunt the bush as they went along, to prevent the buffalo breaking back. It most unfortunately happened that a group of five or six boys had not attended to the instructions, but, as usual, had been following a honey-bird through the bush when orders were given to get out of it. These had lingered to look for the nest, which they found and took out. They then heard the line of beaters advancing, and crossed through the intervening bush to join them. In so doing they ran right on to a clump of half-a-dozen buffalo, which immediately dashed back, and passing above the line of beaters and skirting the bush, got out over the ridge unseen by any of the party. Before a move could be made to follow these, the main line came on to some buffalo, eight or ten in number, and a rattling volley from their weapons echoed loudly through the depths of the kloof. The buffalo, untouched, or at least unhurt, dashed away right up the bush in the direction of the neck guarded by the line of Basutos. I waited no longer, as it was probable the buffalo were all together, and none were then likely to attempt to recross. Jumping on my horse, and taking my heavy rifle from the boy, I told him to follow at his best pace with my long-range rifle, to a spot where we could cross the river on to the other side. As I galloped off towards the drift, I could distinctly hear the buffalo crashing through the bush on the other side, about 300 yards up the ridge; and once I caught sight of a big black object moving rapidly along, but too completely hidden by the bush to give any chance of a shot. As I passed I advised my friends to cross through and climb the other ridge where the line of Basutos was stationed, and hurried on myself to the drift. The river being well up, I had considerable difficulty in getting through, but succeeded at last, and was joined on the other bank by my gun-carrier. I sent word to those boys at the end of the

line nearest the river to wheel round, extending their line along the base of the bush, and to work up so as to endeavour to get the buffalo in between the extended line of stops and the advancing beaters, thus forcing them to stand at bay or to climb out of the high ridge. We then set to work to climb the hill ourselves by a narrow bush-track; and a terrible piece of work it was, for the hill was almost as steep as the side of a house, and one had to crawl through, over, or under the bush and fallen trees, and scramble over the great moss-covered boulders of which the kloof was full. Just as we neared the top we could make out by the shouting that the buffalo were somewhere near by, and the boys evidently getting close on to them. We hurried up as rapidly as we could, but the last part of the climb was a "caution." A landslip had taken place there at some time or other, and the high bank formed thus was covered with enormous boulders piled one on top of the other at every conceivable angle and in every direction, and the whole crowned with such a tangle of thorny creepers and wire-like scrub-bush that at first sight it would appear quite impossible for any living thing to go through it; but we were shortly to have convincing proof to the contrary.

After a tedious clamber we reached the top of this bank, and found ourselves in an open spot in the middle of the bush, perhaps 100 yards across, and 150 in length. The upper part of this clearing was surrounded by very dense bush, apparently equally as thick as that through which we had passed; but in reality it only extended for a distance of 60 or 70 yards, beyond which it became thinner and more scattered; and from there to the top of the ridge, a distance of about 200 yards, the ground was open, though very rough and stony. The clearing alluded to was covered with high, rank, and thickly-matted grass-jungle, which probably had not been burnt off for years. In the centre the grass was about 5 feet high, but all round the edges, close to the bush, it was at least 8 feet—though trampled down in many places by the feet of buffalo, pigs, and bushbuck—and interspersed with long snake-like brambles; and the hill here sloped very steeply towards the river. The first objects which attracted my attention on reaching this place were several dark figures perched well up in the trees which grew here and there over the open spot; so I went up to the nearest and asked

an explanation of their crow-like position, and was informed that the buffalo which had been first started had got away up into the strip of bush at its upper edge, and there the Kafirs had, with commendable smartness, headed them both in front and above, so that they could not possibly either break the line or escape across the open ridge. They seemed properly cornered, and but for an accident must have suffered severely. The boys were now waiting for the arrival of the beaters from below, to cut off the retreat of the game to the bush from which we first drove them. If this was successfully accomplished, only two ways of escape presented themselves: one by breaking cover and crossing the now well-guarded open space, and thence, by entering a deep gully which intersected the bush, make their way along to a rocky fastness higher up the river, the rough nature and great extent of which would have prevented us from getting them out again; the other by way of the blind footpath up which we had come. This latter course was probably beset with dangers for them, as the left flank of the line of stops was wheeling into position, and would be likely to cut them off. It was more than probable, however, that the buffalo would try the open, not having seen the boys in the trees, who evidently did not care to risk a down-hill rush of the heavy brutes on the ground; besides which, the great height of the grass made an elevated position in every way advisable.

My gun-carrier was very anxious that I should also take to a tree, and I would have eventually done so, but was desirous of ascertaining if the stops were posted across the blind footpath; so I told him to climb up with my large bore double rifle, while I took my little single Metford and went back towards the bush to try and get the boys into some sort of line and prevent the buffalo from turning back to the cover. I was not expecting these latter to move for some time—not, in fact, until they were driven out—or else I would certainly not have acted as I did. But it appears that in some way they took alarm suddenly, and without crossing the open, stole back through the bush towards the cover at the upper end, which they would have been unable to do had the beaters from below come up in time. A shout from the group of boys who had headed them warned me they were on the move. By the merest chance they ran on to the left flank

of the advancing beaters, who, firing and wounding a cow, turned them, when they at once made for the slope up which we had climbed. Here some dogs ran into them, and, baffled in that direction, and harried by the dropping shots from the trees, they burst out of the bush and came charging grandly down along the edge of the open space towards the spot where I stood shoulder-deep in tangled thorny scrub. I had had no time to clear out, and there was not a tree near me—nothing but a maze of creepers, briars, and matted grass in front, behind, and on all sides. What would I not have given then for my heavy double rifle! But it was too late; so, prepared for the worst, I cocked my little Metford and stood fast, with as much coolness as I could command, awaiting the oncoming of the great brutes. I heard two shots fired from the tree where my gun-carrier (whom at that moment I envied) and another Kafir were perched, then the thick jungle in front is forced down, and a huge bull, swerving slightly as he sees me, crashes past so closely that I could almost have touched him with my rifle. Swinging round, I let him have it square in the shoulder; next moment the bushes close behind him, as he vanishes in the gloom of the kloof in the direction of the deep gully above mentioned. Just barely time to jam in another cartridge and get the rifle up, when again the scrub waves in front, and a great outstretched head and neck appears, not over 15 yards from me. It was a near thing, and a lucky escape; fortunately the buffalo fell headlong to the shot, tearing up the ground at my feet with her horns as I sprang aside to avoid the charge, but before I could get another cartridge in she recovered herself, and bellowing loudly, dashed off to the left, right on top of the straggling line that were advancing up the footpath. Three or four others turned down with her, and I would have given something to have seen the fun then. Several shots fell in the bush, shouts and yells sounded on all sides, and I heard my brave old Rover's deep bark away down in the kloof, and felt certain he would bring the wounded cow to bay. It appears that the first object the enraged buffalo met was a long Msutu Kafir. I do not know if he stopped to try his Martini carbine on the brute—probably not; any way, he eventually gave "leg-bail" for it. She wheeled at once and made for him, and only that he succeeded in dodging her behind a big yellow-wood tree, would



“I let him have it square in the shoulder.”

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certainly have caught him. W—— fired into her, but the bush was so dense and the charge so irresistible that none of them dared venture too close, and she got away. Old Rover, however, picked her up, and kept close on her heels right down to the river.

In the meanwhile we took the spoor of the old bull, and found him lying dead (with four bullets in him) just on the edge of the gully, about 200 yards from where he got my shot. Some time after, while we were busy getting the bull's head off, we heard Rover baying the wounded cow in the river, but none of the party arriving in time to help the dog, she broke bay, crossed the river, and entered one of the kloofs on the other side. Leaving some of the boys with the bull, I took the remainder with me on the spoor of the cow, which had lost a great quantity of blood, and which I was anxious to secure, as in the very hurried glance I got of her as she charged down she appeared to have a remarkably fine head; and some of the boys who saw her in the bush confirmed that opinion, though the Msutu who was chivied didn't express an opinion at all! P—— had not attempted to climb the hill, being a bit knocked up with the great heat; so he had remained below at the river, but unfortunately was unable to get up in time to get a shot into the cow. As we crossed the river a most violent thunderstorm, which had threatened for some hours, and which the fearful heat throughout the morning had led us to expect, broke over our heads, and in a few minutes each member of the party was drenched to the skin. Not that the major portion of our companions had much on them to get soaked through before the rain reached their skins; still, taken all round, we formed a decidedly bedraggled, sorry-looking crowd, as we again struck out along the spoor when the worst of the storm had passed over. And after all it had its beneficial results, in that it purified the air, which after the morning's exertions was none too sweet in the near vicinity of the Kafirs. The rain still continued to come down sharply, and we soon found, to our great disappointment, that our search was to be a fruitless one, as the blood-spoor was entirely obliterated, and though we could follow the tracks easily enough into the kloof, they very soon ran into those made by the buffalo during the night and early morning;

and after persistent efforts we were forced to give it up. Far into the night the boys exercised their jaws upon the old bull, and conversation did not flag meanwhile, until another very heavy storm broke upon us, driving them off to the shelter afforded by their temporarily built huts.

The bull carried a fine head,—greatest width of horns inside, 36 inches, outside, 42 inches, and span between the tips 31 inches. This, I should fancy, is not far from the maximum size attained by these bush-buffalo, their horns being invariably more stunted than those of the open veldt. The bodies, as a rule, are more hairy, and the height at the shoulders less by a hand. Otherwise there is no difference whatever between the two animals, those that I have mentioned being no more than one would expect to occur under the circumstances, seeing that for years they have been inhabitants of dark densely wooded kloofs, a fact which would in course of time account for their stunted growth and longer hair. I have stated that the horns of these bush-buffalo never attain the size of those of the Low Country, but I should perhaps make one probable exception, as having come under my notice. It happened only last year. I was out riding late one evening, the sun being already a quarter of an hour down as I descended a steep hill towards a small stream, beyond which the bridle-path that I was following led up another particularly steep ascent. When I was yet some distance from the spot where the stream was usually crossed, I noticed six or eight dark objects coming directly down towards the drift, and about 20 yards to one side of the footpath. I took them to be Kafir cattle at first, as there were several kraals within a mile of this spot; but not seeing any herd-boys with them, and knowing that it was unusual for cattle to be straying so far away from a kraal at night, I pulled up to examine them more closely. They were then not over 200 yards distant, and I saw at once—as they came out of the scrub and approached the drift—that they were buffalo: their uniformly dark colour would have left no doubt in my mind, even had I been unable to see their rugged horns. They were quite unconscious of my presence, but I was powerless to harm them, as I had no weapon of any sort with me—a most unusual circumstance, for it is seldom I move abroad without a rifle. I

had to lead the horse down to the drift, as the path was nearly perpendicular; and as I approached the stream the buffalo came nearer from the opposite side, till when I reached the drift there was less than 70 yards between us. I was very doubtful of Nguanetsi, my horse,—a high-spirited, restless, but courageous animal, and the pet of the stable,—as he had already commenced to get uneasy at the near approach of the buffalo, and I thought he might just possibly land me in an awkward position. But my curiosity was too strong to allow me to leave them without a nearer acquaintance, especially as I knew the speed of my nag, and that I had the heels of them in the unlikely event of a charge *en masse*. The water in the drift was deep, and the buffalo evidently heard the horse splashing through it, for when we climbed out of the steep bank which had hidden us from view when in the water, they had pulled up, and were standing grouped together under some low bush, perhaps 40 yards distant. They did not seem a bit alarmed, for as I watched them—riding towards them all the time and keeping my horse well in hand—a large cow walked forward a few paces, and, lowering her head, sniffed noisily about on the footpath, the remainder quietly staring at me. Nguanetsi behaved splendidly, for though he trembled slightly, and gazed very fixedly at them, he took me up to less than 25 yards of the group. It was then for the first time that I noticed a monster bull with them, I think the grandest specimen I have ever set eyes upon, with a massive widespread pair of horns. At the time I would have given anything, except my horse, for a rifle, for such a trophy as that old bull carried is not seen twice in a lifetime nowadays. For a moment the idea of retracing my steps to the nearest kraal and borrowing an old musket came into my mind; then I abandoned it as impracticable, for long ere I could return it would have been quite dark, and the buffalo possibly a mile away. As I turned my horse broadside to pass across their front, the buffalo moved slightly, and the old bull stepped a few paces forward, lowering his head and sniffing on the grass-tops, then looking up again rather wickedly at me. One touch of the spur I felt would send my nag careering over the veldt at top speed, but I did not intend to retreat in any but a dignified manner. When nearly past them, they whisked round, and

set off up the hill at a lumbering gallop, though the old bull twice stopped and turned to look at me before disappearing finally into a bush over the ridge. I searched everywhere for them next day, but the bull had probably retired discreetly with his family to some far-distant kloof, for I have never seen him again since.

In all the district to which I have referred, there are few uglier and rougher kloofs, or more secure retreats to suit the necessarily retiring habits of the buffalo, than those which cut up both slopes of the long, lofty spurs through which the 'Mtitshi river winds its tortuous course towards the larger Waritshi—and the scene of the incidents just related. In parts the bush is extensive and very dense, indeed practically impenetrable; but, as a rule, the buffalo, unless disturbed, appear to prefer taking up their abode in the smaller kloofs in the vicinity, throughout all of which extensive reed-beds, more or less dense, are to be found; whilst upon the outskirts great areas of thorny jungle, which annually escape the devouring fires, afford them most ample security. To enter such places on foot is most fatiguing and always unsatisfactory, and one would not get ten yards inside before "hooking up."

Some few years ago, in the latter end of October, a party of us ascertained that a troop of about thirty buffalo were in a rough heavily-wooded kloof about a mile in length, on the north bank of the 'Mtitshi, with a long high ridge, thickly clothed with bush, and a wide irregular plain of long grass, and detached clumps of thorny scrub, lying between it and the river. The north side of the kloof was cut up by numerous *dongas*, and though the late fires had swept off all last season's grass, and a new garment of brightest emerald lay spread over ridges and hollows, the ground could scarcely be called open, owing to the luxuriant growth of acaciæ, *'mngcosi*, and low flowering bushes which intercepted the view in all directions. There lay another extensive kloof at the back of the more open ridge, and much frequented by the buffalo from time to time; and as it was possible the latter might endeavour to get away into it, we hoped to get shots at them when crossing the ridge. The thick thorny jungle on the south side of the kloof, in which the buffalo had been marked down, was quite untouched

by the fires,—a real bush-pigs' paradise, with its *chevaux-de-frise* of 'mcopi, 'mkonto w'endhlovu, and "wait-a-bit" thorns. From the upper end of this kloof a strip of narrow but exceptionally dense bush extended over a low "saddle" on the ridge, and connected it with the thinner and more straggling cover on the river-side. Our party consisted of four rifles, and word having been previously sent round amongst the native headmen that we required a number of beaters, upon the appointed day these turned up promptly enough; so that when we mustered them on the ridge above the scene of operations, we found that we had between sixty and seventy likely- and unlikely-looking assistants. Of their arms and accoutrements the less said the better; the collection would have been interesting and more useful in the Tower armoury. Powder, as usual, was at a premium amongst them, and in one instance I noticed an energetic fellow ramming down a 2- or 3-ounce ball and half a yard more or less of old rag—probably a piece from the tail of his shirt—on the top of a very short 2 drams of powder of the worst possible description. But they were blithely happy, every "man Jack" of them, as perhaps only the swarthy sons of Africa know how to be, with a hunt in prospect, and a probable surfeit of fat meat to be looked forward to. It is all for the present with them,—neither the past nor the future troubles them; and therein, perhaps, lies the secret of their capacity for enjoyment, and of the light hold which grief has upon them. Verily, *they* "take no thought for the morrow"!

We distributed sundry bunches of squibs and crackers amongst the leaders, with orders to blaze away and not spare them; but I fancy a very large percentage found its way into their pockets and pouches, not to be produced until the sacred precincts of their kraals were reached, there to be displayed before the wondering gaze of their women-folk! One old fellow, short of both pockets and pouch—and we should say of brains as well, unless he was a confirmed believer in predestination—coolly threaded the strings holding the bunches of squibs together, through the slit lobes of each ear—the pocket in which the snuff-box is usually kept—and marched off in apparently good humour with the world in general and himself in particular.

Everything being in readiness, we divided our gang into three

parties, one receiving instructions to proceed to the lower end of the kloof to cut off the retreat of the buffalo in that direction; another to get round the upper end of the kloof, and making their way down the dividing ridge, to join the spoorers lower down on that same spur: these, having the greatest extent of grass-jungle to pass through, had most of the squibs, &c., amongst them. The third division was ordered to enter the bush at the head of the kloof, and carefully drive it down. No limit was put upon the amount of lung-power to be employed. The Scotch cart which G—— had brought down with him, we left out-spanned at our camp, and our horses in charge of a herd-boy. When all were started we made our way down the ridge on the north side of the kloof, and stationed ourselves at likely openings; while holding ourselves in readiness for a move in any direction, in case some unforeseen event rendered an alteration of our plans necessary. For about an hour after we had taken up our posts we could hear nothing stirring: muffled noises reached us from the dark depths of the kloof, conveying no special meaning to our anxious ears; an occasional crack of squibs could be heard like the distant sound of a waggon-whip, and here and there thick columns of brown smoke ascended into the calm morning air, marking the course of the beaters on the opposite ridge. But the burning of the jungle was by no means an unqualified success, only small patches condescending to blaze up in decent fashion. Soon afterwards a couple of Kafir dogs noisily announced the fact that they were on the track of some cunning old bush-pig, or no less wary bushbuck,—but still no buffalo. At last a single shot fell far up the kloof, followed after an interval by another. Then some desperate shouting, barking of dogs, and general excitement. This soon subsided, however, only to be followed, after another space of silence, by the unmistakable sharp ring of a white man's rifle; a brief pause, another shot, then five or six in quick succession. Ha! that's more like it; surely that means business! At all events it was getting more interesting, and I for one stood keenly listening for the first sound of crashing branches in the kloof below, that should give warning of the advent of the game we sought. Still nothing, and as I scanned the jungle on the other side with eager eyes in vain, I was joined by my friend H——,

who, like myself, was puzzled to know what was going on at the upper end of the kloof.

I have long ago come to the conclusion that in such cases it is quite useless, nay foolish, to leave one's post, and to go away any distance in the hope of bettering one's chances. Select your post with care at first, and stick to it; in the long-run you will meet with greater success than by dodging about here and there whenever you think you are "out of the fun." Besides that, there is an element of great danger in it, if shooting with others in company, as one might very easily take up a new position quite close to a comrade, separated from him only by a leafy screen, which, while it prevents your seeing each other, would offer no manner of resistance to a rifle-bullet. H—— was quite of my opinion, that we should do better where we were; but when at last we heard a shout of "Ti pumile!" ("They've gone out!"), and, after sundry "cross-questions and crooked answers" across the breadth of the kloof, ascertained that the buffalo had broken cover, crossed the ridge through the connecting strip of bush, and gone down into the valley on the other side, there seemed no further reason for hesitation; so, accompanied by a single native, we hurried down to the kloof, crossing the stream on the other side, and commenced our scramble through the dense grass-jungle to reach the top of the spur—our intention being to try and descend on the other side in time to cut the buffalo off if they made down the river, as it seemed probable they would do. But little did we dream of the task that lay before us: all too keenly we hurried forward, stumbling over great rocks and fallen timber lying hidden in the long grass, and hooking up on all sorts of villanous thorns; and all this under a blazing October sun. We gained the dividing spur at last, and rested a few seconds to get breath, whilst taking mental note of the splendid panorama spread out before us. Six hundred feet below, almost sheer down, lay the valley through which the river flowed, apparently a confused mass of grass and jungle, bush, donga, and stony ridges. Far below us we could see the river, glimmering between its wooded banks; and the rugged face of the opposite spur on its south bank, distant from where we stood perhaps three miles; and over all the quivering heat-glare of noonday, obscuring the outlines and doubling the distances.

A wild prospect truly, and one that would have appalled us by its evident suggestiveness of toil and fag, had we been after any other game than buffalo. As it was, we had no thought of giving up. We quickly commenced another horrible scramble, only down-hill this time, till we emerged at last from the bush, and walked out along a comparatively open ridge, crossing the valley at right angles; and as this put us well in front of the spoorers, and commanded a large extent of bush and scrub, in which, presumably, the buffalo had taken refuge, we were not long in getting into a shady spot, and taking a welcome rest after our exertions. Poor foolish mortals! how gladly would we have extended that period of rest to half an hour or even twenty minutes! but no such luck! H—— had just made a remark to me about the likelihood of the buffalo coming out our way, when we heard a "clarion voice far up the height," and "Excelsior!" was practically what it said. It came this time from a little knot of honey-seekers, perched like crows upon a prominent rock half-way up the hillside, on the spur we had just descended. "Em'va! buya-ni ng'em'va!" ("Back, come back!") What! is it possible that we hear aright? Must we really drag our miserable selves up that hill again? "The brave old Duke of York" and his "ten thousand men" had a light task, surely, compared to ours! But there is no help for it; a mistake has been made somewhere, and either the buffalo never left the first kloof or there are still some left in it, and if we would see sport we must hurry up, and "the devil take the hindmost." How heavy those 9½-lb. rifles became ere we regained the top of the spur I leave those to judge who have had similar experience, and the full cartridge belts weighed like magazines-full of ammunition. Down the other side of the hill was child's play in comparison, and after halting for a moment to get a cooling drink in the stream which rippled pleasantly over its rocky bed at the bottom of the kloof, we quickly climbed the opposite bank, and once again stood at our old posts, bitterly repenting ever having left them, and very unlikely to try it again.

Fortunately we secured a brief rest before the curtain rose upon the last act, and I had the first draw at my pipe since leaving the cart in the morning. Whilst wrapped in the blue clouds that

curled slowly and lingeringly from the well-worn briar, a sudden shout broke upon our ears, followed by a single shot and a vigorous barking of dogs; then the crashing of branches became audible, mingled with confused shouts and cries proceeding from the upper end of the kloof. H—— and I then parted company, standing in the places originally occupied by us in the morning. The din sounds nearer, and each grasps his rifle more firmly, and strains watchful eyes for a glimpse of the game, now certainly afoot. A perfect fusillade rattles through the bush, echoed again and again by the surrounding hills and kloofs. Hurrah, our turn at last! Hark to the crashing of the underwood, as the huge brutes rush headlong through it! Everything gives way before them; branches rattle down, long tough saplings are bent like highly strung bows till their leafy tops touch the ground, then fly back as the trampling hoofs pass on; the very stones are dashed aside with a clatter, and giant creepers, all thorn-protected as they are, snap like threads before the mighty rush of the infuriated beasts! A few of the best dogs are up with them, having followed closely as they tore a path down through the kloof at top speed. As the buffalo reach the end of the bush, they realise that they must either stand at bay or break cover and take the open. A short pause; see, down in the reed-bed below us, how the feathered heads quiver, tremble, and wave! In rush the dogs. Hurrah, at bay at last! Angry now grow the dogs' voices, and loudest, angriest of all that of my gallant old Rover. With fierce wild grunts the buffalo turn on their pursuers, but, anxious for another try to escape by the dividing ridge, they dash in on the dogs, and before we can scramble down into the kloof to help, two bulls successfully reach the grass-jungle on the other side. But it avails them nothing, for they at once expose themselves to our fire from across the kloof. Sharply our rifles ring out, and with immediate effect, for they cease their efforts to climb the spur, and first one, and then the other, turns and stands at bay for the last time. The Kafirs close round, and for a few moments dire confusion reigns, of which one of the grim old monsters takes advantage to make a headlong charge, scattering dogs and natives in a manner which reminds one forcibly of springbuck on the High-veldt when a bullet drops amongst them.

But it is his last effort, for ere he can regain the cover he left, he trembles, totters, and falls,

"As falls on Mount Avernus the thunder-smitten oak!"

Face to his foes stands his companion, his little gleaming eyes peering angrily out from under the gnarled front of horn. A splendidly delivered bullet from H——'s unerring rifle decides the day: the old bull, on receiving the shot, turns half back in the cover with a defiant bellow, makes yet another game attempt



"His little gleaming eyes peering angrily out."

to charge, staggers a few paces, and falls not more than 20 feet from where lay his grim companion. I will make no attempt to describe the scene that followed. The confusion of tongues consequent upon the meeting together under such circumstances of more than sixty representatives of a dozen different tribes of natives, each talking his loudest and fastest, and gesticulating his wildest, absolutely baffles all description.

Only one slight accident happened throughout the day, when

some valorous individual let fly a barrellful of *buckshot* at the buffalo, one pellet of which—glancing from a tree, or perhaps from the buffalo's horns—had struck another boy on the chest. It made only a very slight flesh-wound, though at first, to look at the fellow and listen to his groans, one would certainly have imagined that his end was near.

Our horses were soon brought round, and after a good pull at the flask, tempered by a careful admixture of cool clear water from the stream, we returned to camp, where by sundown we had the trophies laid out on the grass, and, whilst examining them, rehearsed the day's doings.

They were both fine beasts, but in poor condition, though there did not seem to be much regret on that account amongst the boys when the meat was cut up and divided between them, after the usual amount of haggling and quarrelling.

CHAPTER IX.

LEOPARDS AND THEIR HABITS.

Much-maligned animals—*Leopardus sum*—The promptings of instinct—Great daring—Variety and species—Comparison of the Asiatic and African forms—Temminck an authority—Unreliable measurements—Best method of measuring trophies—The hill leopard—Low-Country leopard—Intermediate forms—Frequent occurrence—Specific unity—Adaptability to surroundings—Most daring in stormy weather—Mode of attack—Seizing and killing their prey—Appearances against them—A unique incident—Goats an easy prey—Tit-bits—Lion or leopard?—Returning to a kill—Native stupidity—An amused listener—Careful approach to a kill—Tree-climbing—Leopard and baboons—Standing at bay—Leopardess and cubs—Family matters—Prolific animals—The natives' opinion—A "bull."

THERE is certainly no animal amongst the larger fauna of South Africa that has obtained so small a share of attention in works of sport as the much-maligned beautiful leopard. Here and there passing mention has been made of it, but always in terms the very reverse of complimentary—"sneaking," "cowardly," "skulking" being amongst the most frequent. Although from time to time I have suffered serious losses from its marauding habits, the pursuit of the leopard and the study of its life-history have ever possessed for me the greatest attraction and charm; and in the course of the relation of a few of the many adventures I have met with while hunting it, I will endeavour to show that it is far from being the contemptible sneak and utter coward that many would have us believe. Such terms are invariably applied to it by those who know least about its actual habits, or who argue from altogether false premisses. In passing judg-

ment upon the character of the leopard, it appears to me that sufficient allowance is not made for its natural habits and mode of life. Nature has made the great spotted cat what he is; has endowed him with marvellous agility and strength within the compass of a comparatively small body; has made him lithe and sinewy, and capable of seeing well by night, the time when his food is most easily secured. Therefore, because he but follows the bent of his natural instinct, and calls into play such powers as nature has given to him, it seems most unfair and unreasonable to heap terms of contumely upon him for that reason. In most cases the game upon the capture of which his subsistence depends is swifter of foot than himself, therefore he must resort to stratagem to effect its seizure.

The general officer in command of an army would scarcely care to be called "sneaking" or "cowardly" because he resorted to stratagem to accomplish the overthrow of an enemy numerically superior, perhaps, or better armed than himself. Surely, then, in the case of an animal that is formed by nature to require certain food, and to obtain it in a certain manner, it would be equally unjust to apply these terms simply because it acted according to nature's dictates. Furthermore, when seeking food in the neighbourhood of human habitations, a leopard's instinct tells him that the dangers to be encountered are many, and that without due precaution failure is certain. In common with everything that has life, he is true to the instinct of self-preservation. An elephant, with all his mighty strength, will run from the sound of a human voice, yet he is never called cowardly. Why, then, should the term be applied to an animal infinitely less gifted with powers of self-defence and of destruction? My experience points to the fact that, for all his innate wariness and stealthy cunning, the leopard is an incredibly daring brute, and will usually show fight where a far larger and more powerful animal would try to back out of it.

The question of variety and species as applied to leopards has of late caused a considerable amount of discussion amongst naturalists and sportsmen; and although it may now be considered as settled in favour of unity of species, there is no doubt that all parties are not satisfied. The similarity between the Asiatic and African forms is, I believe, very generally admitted;

in both countries a large and small variety are met with, as well as other forms occupying an intermediate position in respect of both. These will exhibit characteristics that would assign them with equal reason to either form; and it is upon this rock that those who contend that two distinct species exist must split, as, upon examining one of these intermediate forms, they are unable to refer it definitely to either one or the other of the typical forms. It appears to me that if it is desired to prove the existence of distinct species, some marked difference in their anatomical structure must be shown, or even in their habits; though this latter would be a less convincing argument, seeing how animals of one species differ in their habits under the influence of surrounding circumstances. General dimensions and coloration count for little, and for the same reason. In the remarks that I have to make upon the two varieties of this animal, it will be clearly understood that reference is made to the African forms, of which, in their wild state, exceptional opportunities have been afforded me for close study, thereby enabling me to speak with some degree of confidence. Of the Indian forms I have had no experience, and am therefore only able to judge of them by what I have read in the many works upon Indian natural history and sport now before the public, and by observation of the animals in captivity.

Some time ago a letter appeared in 'Land and Water' from the pen of the eminent zoologist Mr Lydekker—joint author with Professor Flower of that most interesting and useful guide-book for the zoological student, 'Mammals, Living and Extinct'—in which he quoted Temminck as having identified the smaller Indian form with the African animal. Now, considering that this "smaller Indian form" referred to an animal "never exceeding, if ever attaining, 7 feet in total length," I feel compelled, with all due respect to so great an authority, to consider this statement as misleading. That the smaller Indian form can be identified with the *smaller* African form, I can well understand—indeed I have little doubt it is absolutely identical; but to say that all African leopards, as a class, can be described as animals "never exceeding, if ever attaining, 7 feet in total length," as the statement would lead us to infer, is certainly incorrect. I have myself shot many leopards in this country

considerably exceeding that length — that is, of course, according to my own measurements; and therein, I think, lies the strongest argument against accepting measurements from sportsmen as being in any way conclusive. While perfectly willing to admit that sportsmen are ever desirous of arriving at the accurate dimensions of a trophy brought to bag by them, there are so many different methods of attaining that end that it seems difficult to arrive at a satisfactory result in that way, at any rate in so far as determination of species is concerned.

No absolutely fair measurement of an animal can be obtained after the skin is removed from it, as it will vary according as the animal is in or out of condition, or as the weather is hot or cold; while in any case the length of time that elapses between its death and the measurements being taken will give different results. Obviously the only value that can be set upon the recorded length of a hide when stripped from the body is such as it possesses in the eyes of the sportsman himself who shot the animal; as a record of the actual length of the beast itself, it is most misleading. And to give the measurements of pegged-out skins is even worse, for it is an easy matter to make a difference of a foot either way in the case of a leopard, and one's Kafirs, to whom the work is frequently relegated, will invariably stretch it to its utmost. I fancy the fairest means by which to arrive at the length of an animal is to pass the tape along the body lightly, from the tip of the nose to the end of the fleshy part of the tail, following the curves of the body, and giving the tail measurement separately. This is preaching what I have not always practised myself; still I am convinced it is the fairest plan that can be adopted. It is always well to take the length in a straight line, also, between two assegais or sticks placed one at the nose and the other at the tail; but the body must not be dragged out, merely laid naturally. This plan is open to the objection, however, that an animal sometimes falls with its head twisted underneath it, and if the body becomes stiff before the measurements are taken, it is no longer feasible, whereas the other always is, no matter how the animal may be lying. Shoulder height should always be taken in a straight line between two sticks. But until sportsmen are unanimously agreed upon the adoption of one

particular plan, recorded lengths are likely to be unreliable for comparison.

But to resume. There can be no doubt whatever but that animals possessing the individual characteristics of two distinct yet closely-allied forms do exist in Africa—forms distinct as to colour and habits, yet specifically identical. The hill, bush, or kloof leopard is an animal averaging about 6 feet 5 inches in total length, of which the tail occupies about 2 feet 10 inches; height at the shoulder 2 feet 5 inches: of great girth and muscular development, and with a somewhat long narrow head. The fur is long, and usually of a very dark rich buff colour upon the upper parts, and pure white underneath and inside the limbs. The bases of the ears at the back are black; the spots are very dark brown, or more frequently black, and are arranged in groups of three or four in the form of open rosettes of varying size, with a darker tint of the ground colour in the centre. These rosettes, however, only occur on the back, sides, and upper part of the tail,—the spots on the thighs, upper part of the forearm, flanks, and belly being simple in form, as also on the face, head, neck, and extremities of the limbs, where they are of small size and more frequent. Those on the chest are irregular, and frequently form broad bars. The most distinctive forms of the hill leopard are easily recognised by the manner in which the rosette markings upon the back run one into another, forming long, broad, dark stripes from the nape of the neck to half-way down the tail. These stripes of course are more or less broken, and usually four or five in number.

The Low-Country leopard is a long gaunt-looking brute, standing 2 feet 8 at the shoulder, and averaging from 6 feet 10 to 7 feet in total length, with a tail-measurement of 2 feet 6 inches. The fur is shorter and sleeker; the head round, short, and heavy; the limbs long, and by comparison less massive than those of the hill leopard—the greatest girth of forearm that I have recorded, being that of a hill leopard, $13\frac{1}{2}$ inches. The ground colour is usually pale fawn, though it differs in various individuals; but I have never seen it so dark as that of the most pronounced varieties of the hill leopard. The spots are similarly arranged to those of the latter animal, but, except in the intermediate forms to which I shall presently refer, the markings on the back never

run into lines or bars, but invariably retain their rosette shape, the rosettes being quite separated from one another, and appearing very distinct, owing to the shortness of the fur.

Such, according to my observations, are the distinctive features of the two forms, taking the most typical examples for illustration. Now, considering the fact that the habits of these two animals differ considerably in many respects, there might possibly be some grounds for declaring them to be specifically distinct, or at any rate permanent varieties, but for the fact that connecting links between them exist; and not only that, but they exist in larger numbers than the purely typical forms: full-grown leopards 6 feet 7 inches or 6 feet 8 inches in length, tails 33 inches, heads which, except by very close comparison, it would be difficult to describe as either long or short, broad or narrow, and with markings upon the body characteristic of both forms, some of the rosettes on the back being open, others merged together into broken lines or bars; and these are the animals far more frequently met with than the others.

These intermediate forms, therefore, to my mind, undoubtedly establish the specific unity of all, and it is very easy to believe that climatic influence and adaptability to surroundings can account for far greater variations in size and colour than in this case exist. I can readily understand the hill or bush leopard being quite at fault on the hot sweltering grass-plains of the Low Country; but if perforce he be driven there from any cause whatsoever, and obliged to remain, he would before long assimilate his mode of life to his surroundings, lose all the marked characteristics of the hill leopard—especially the great muscular development—and gradually become in habits and appearance like other Low-Country animals. The former passes his life under totally different conditions from those under which his lowland relative exists. Cool, dark, silent kloofs, sterile hills and krantzies, breed habits of wariness and retirement unknown to dwellers upon the open sparsely-wooded plains teeming with game, and the muscular development of the latter naturally falls far short of that possessed by the bush leopard, who has to work hard and oft for his living. Do we not find the same thing amongst the members of the human race? The Highland and Lowland Scotch, for instance; the hill and plain tribes of India;

the warlike, powerful Swazis in their land of hills and mountains, and the enervated lowland 'Tonga of the East Coast!

There are few animals that surpass the leopard in stealthy cunning, and he who would outwit them on their own ground must understand their habits very thoroughly, exercise the greatest patience and perseverance, and above all keep heart even in the face of repeated failures and disappointments. Leopards are generally very silent creatures, and seldom betray their presence by any sound, as it is the custom of lions to do. They are, indeed, far more nocturnal in their habits, and never, except in wet cool weather, move abroad so early in the evening, nor keep about so late in the morning, as lions; and even when cool weather does tempt them out they remain very silent. Nevertheless, in the kloof country where they are numerous, their harsh cry can be not unfrequently heard in the dense bush, if one knows *what to listen for*. The Low-Country leopard is far more often heard, as he patrols the banks of the rivers and water-courses about midnight, proving him to be, as I have before remarked, a less cautious animal than the hill leopard. Leopards are always most dangerous in dull, or still more so in wet, stormy weather, as they are then always on the move, knowing full well that at such times cattle and goats are more apt to stray, and to seek shelter on the edges of kloofs and bush.

The leopard's mode of attack is similar to that of all the larger Felidæ. Ever on the alert, he soon hears the distant bleating of calves or goats, and ascertaining by the direction of the sound that the luckless animals are a little distance away from the sheltering kraals, he advances quickly but stealthily upon them from below wind. No snake in the grass moves more noiselessly; the long lithe body accommodates itself to all the intricacies of the thorny tangled bush, and the most watchful would never know of its dreaded approach. Many times I have known leopards creep up through long cover to the edge of my *schirm*, or to the foot of the tree in which I have been watching, and I have been absolutely ignorant of their presence till some movement on my part has startled them and sent them bounding away into the bush with deep grunts. Should they be the first to discover the near proximity of the sportsman, they will retreat

just as silently as they came ; and but for the spoor visible in the morning, the watcher would have no cause to know that a leopard had been within a mile of him. Their attack is marvellously determined and rapid, and if they once lay hold they are not to be deterred by the fact that the game seems going against them, but will fight with implacable fury. If, however, their first attack on any so formidable an animal as a boar fails, I think they seldom renew it.

In killing their prey they adopt various tactics, according to circumstances: sometimes they rush at their victim, and, springing on the shoulder, seize it by the back of the head, the large canine teeth penetrating the brain. Death, however, as frequently results from strangulation and from the severing of the jugular vein. This occurs when the animals have been standing with their heads towards the leopard at the moment of attack, and are consequently seized from in front, the chest and side of the face being usually torn by the leopard's claws. I have seen large goats killed by fang-wounds in the vertebræ of the neck, about 8 inches behind the ears. I have known three koodoo bulls killed by severance of the jugular vein, and ram bushbuck are often thus secured. I have never seen one of these animals with wounds at the back of the head, though, when two leopards attack, the shoulders and neck are bitten. Not unfrequently the neck of the victim is broken. But I do not believe this is done intentionally: it has always seemed to occur when the animal is seized while standing or feeding on a hillside or other sloping ground, the violence of the leopard's charge upon one side or the other forcing the animal over on to its head. If the leopard intended to kill by dislocation, the nose of the animal would be often seized by its claws so as to drag the head underneath, as happens in the case of a lion's attack ; but this I have never known to be done, and I am convinced that where the neck of the victim is dislocated it is purely by accident. Human beings are seized by the shoulder, and almost invariably the scalp is torn over the eyes by the leopard's claws, a leopard being capable of inflicting fearful harm in a very short space of time.

Leopards are terribly destructive animals amongst sheep, goats, and suchlike, for they appear to kill merely for the love of killing, and this at first sight is the worst feature about them. I am

inclined to think, however, that appearances are against them, and that they fully intend to eat what they kill if given the opportunity. I have known a couple of leopards kill fourteen goats out of a troop; they only went away with two of these, the reason being most probably that two were sufficient for present needs. The following day the remaining twelve carcasses were discovered by the owner and removed. Had they not been thus removed, another couple would probably have disappeared during the night. Only a few months ago some leopards killed six goats close to my house: one of the six carcasses we did not find; possibly after having been killed in some particularly dense patch of bush, it had been carried away by the leopardess, which had cubs. Another, a very old beast which I shot in the morning, killed a goat in the open and left it lying, afterwards crossing a gully towards another carcass killed by the male leopard, which she dragged into the kloof and devoured, probably assisted by the male in the task. The latter killed three others, two of which it dragged a distance of over 200 yards, laying them together side by side in the bush. One of the carcasses which it had left in the open had been dragged a few yards, but either the leopard had been disturbed or had not cared for the further exertion, so left it lying where we found it in the morning. But the occurrence is quite an unusual one. As a rule, they kill unsparingly, but carry off only one or two of the victims the same night; consequently, when the owner finds the remaining carcasses next day, the leopard is accredited with having killed more than it intends to eat, for mere killing's sake.

A peculiar fact is worth recording here in connection with the incident above referred to. I could not determine whether the younger leopardess assisted her mate in killing any of the goats, but I think not. Apparently the leopard and the old leopardess made the first attack simultaneously, approaching from below wind, and between the goats and the nearest kraal. At the first attack the leopardess killed; then the troop split up, some possibly running away back at once towards the kraals, while the leopard, making no attempt to kill at this first attack, drove the goats round and round, heading them if they attempted to escape up the ridge or down towards the kraal, till he at last brought them round again to the vicinity of the spot upon which the old

leopardess had killed the first goat—a most clever piece of strategy, I think. And even then he appeared to have played with the luckless creatures—if the word “played” is applicable to such a case, for he had raced them round in savage glee all over the bush, and the open grassy spur where he eventually killed them. This was certainly done in wild play, as he could of course have sprung upon them at any time he so desired. The male certainly did most of the killing, for the leopardess merely appropriated one goat and dragged it off. At all events, it was the leopard’s larger spoor which we found everywhere around the spot where the goats had been chased. These latter animals are so ridiculously stupid that they ever fall an easy prey to their cunning enemy. If a leopard attacks, the unfortunate individual that is first collared sings out “blue murder,” and at once the rest of the troop—which at the first rush of the leopard had made tracks as hard as they could leg it—halt, and look round to see what is the matter. This they are afforded every opportunity for ascertaining, as the leopard again springs amongst them. Once more they take to their heels, but only to act in precisely the same way when the second victim yells out.

The strength of a leopard is really wonderful when one considers its size and weight, which in a good full-grown specimen will be 180 to 190 lb.; yet they can with ease drag off an animal of 120 or 130 lb. weight; and I have known a leopard drag a waterbuck bull—fully 400 lb. weight—a distance of 80 yards, though of course the carcass was not lifted from the ground. As a rule, with a pig or bushbuck, let us say, they lift and drag, always holding on by the neck. As leopards in the hill country invariably remove their kill from the spot where they seize it to some dense, low, thorny bush, they are obliged to drag it, as in many places they themselves have to crouch to pass under the low scrub.

Their principal food in the hill country consists of ground-pigs, duiker, 'msumbi, bush-pigs, bushbuck, monkeys, and hyrax, besides goats, sheep, and calves. I have only known one instance of a single leopard tackling a full-grown cow: it was eventually beaten off, but the cow died of its wounds.

After killing a goat, we will say, and dragging it off to some dense bush or rocky kloof where it intends to eat it, the leopard

usually goes through a series of gymnastic performances, consisting of springing up at the bushes and trees, frequently tumbling headlong to the ground from a great height, then rushing backwards and forwards through the scrub in the vicinity of the kill, returning to which, it will drag it about a little, turn it over and over, seize it by the throat and shake it, and again resume its jumping exercise; and I have seen trees scored down in this way to a height of 15 feet from the ground. This performance is frequently repeated, though less fully and vigorously, after it has eaten; and I on one occasion saw a leopard drop a duiker which it was carrying off to a bush, and rushing away 20 yards, spring up at a sapling which gave with its weight, and after seizing it in its jaws, let it go, run back to its kill, and walk off with it, till disturbed by me.

In commencing operations upon a carcass, after sniffing it all over well, as do all the *Felidæ*, the leopard rips it open and disembowels it, at once devouring the heart, lungs, and other viscera, and rolling the entrails into a heap, partially buries them under leaves or sand. I have never yet met with a case of a leopard burying them so completely as a lion will do—indeed it is exceptional for them to actually bury them at all, they only make a feeble attempt at it, and in bush merely roll them over and over amongst the dead leaves; but they never attempt to eat them. They then attack the cartilaginous matter around the breast-bone and the soft ends of the rib-bones. This is always proof positive of a leopard having eaten at a carcass, without which it would not be easy to decide whether the animal was killed by a young lion or a leopard. On hard ground the spoor will not be visible. In either case the wounds causing death will be found in the throat—certainly in the case of a leopard, and very possibly in that of a lion; whilst in both cases the bulk of the meal will have been made from the hind-quarters: but if the breast-bone has been eaten, and the soft ends of the rib-bones chewed, one can rely upon it that a leopard is the animal to be expected at the carcass. A lion will eat these portions also, but not before tackling the hind-quarters. Naturally a lion will have eaten more than one leopard could do, but very little more than two, especially if he has been disturbed at his meal. And again, the fact as to whether the animal killed has been dragged

or not, taking the size and weight of such animal into consideration, is an important though not infallible guide. It will generally be found also that a leopard devours a carcass at the place to which he has dragged it after killing, whereas a lion almost invariably drags a kill, if only a few feet, each time he returns to it; or if it be too heavy for him to tackle, he will tear off a leg or some other portion and drag it into the grass some yards away, and there devour it.

The bush leopard seldom returns to its kill, if it has been actually disturbed at it; though if it has been lying up some little distance away and is disturbed, it will not hesitate to do so. The lowland leopard, on the contrary, will return twenty times if need be, displaying the most surprising audacity. Probably this is owing to the fact that it does not know so much of man, and consequently fears him less, not having learned how much danger to itself his proximity may indicate; whereas the hill leopard knows full well that if disturbed at a kill, he may expect on his return to find a trap or spring-gun ready for him. The latter animals are even most chary about again touching a kill, if it has merely been interfered with during its absence, though they will not hesitate to devour a bait that has been placed for them in the bush close to their accustomed haunts to enable the sportsman to get a shot at them at night. It is needless, perhaps, to remark that this plan does not recommend itself very strongly, owing to the uncertainty attendant upon it: the leopards that were here to-day may be a mile away to-morrow. A tethered goat or other animal is an almost certain attraction for a leopard, and he will come to it from a long distance on hearing it bleat, but when he sees it, he is most suspicious of it, and sometimes cannot screw up his courage to attack it till the second night.

I have lost many a good chance at leopards through the stupid folly of Kafirs. We will say that a goat has been ascertained to be missing from a kraal one evening; on the following morning the owner has a palaver over the matter with his friends and relations, and probably enrolls four or five of them as volunteers to assist him to find the lost animal. The spoor made by the troop of goats on the previous day is carefully followed, and in most cases the carcass is discovered, probably half-eaten. Then these wiseacres sit down, hold another palaver for half an hour, during

which time they will have constructed an extempore smoking-horn for wild hemp, and have gone through the usual insane performance, including the violent coughing, which perhaps is unavoidable, and the copious expectorations, which are as avoidable as they are disgusting. Then some of them proceed to skin the goat, or remove such of the skin as is not torn to pieces; another brings dry wood for a fire, which he lights; and yet another squeezes the entrails (to empty them of their contents), which are thrown on to the live coals, and when hot—not cooked, but heated through—are eaten. Then it takes them another half hour to decide who shall go and “tell the baas,” and whilst the one selected comes to inform me that a leopard has killed a goat and that he can show me the spot, the others return homewards, feeling that they have done their duty as men and citizens. Now how is it possible to work amicably with such arrant fools? The leopard is probably within earshot all the time, perhaps lying stretched along the lower limb of a great wild fig-tree, or taking his ease under the shadow of some friendly rock in the deep rough kloof, from which he had issued forth the previous day to capture the goat which these evil-minded people would deprive him of. If he has any sense of the ludicrous, he will grin ferociously between his paws as he listens to the hum of conversation around the dead goat, and the idiots who cause it will only get their deserts if the leopard decides to select a fresh victim from the kraal that night. I have known that done more than once; in fact there is no telling what act of cunning devilment a leopard will not do.

They usually revisit a kill later, and leave it earlier, than a lion would do under similar circumstances—generally turning up about midnight, and leaving again an hour before dawn, during which time a full-grown leopard will eat from 20 to 25 lb. of meat. As a rule, they approach their kill in perfect silence, though I have heard them uttering a low grating cry as they circle round the spot at some distance, when they suspect danger. They invariably examine the neighbourhood of the kill very carefully as they approach: in fact, nothing can exceed the stealthy caution of their movements under these circumstances. They are greedy feeders, and noisy into the bargain: a pair of them will make more fuss and growling over a carcass than

would four lions. It is seldom that they leave a carcass to go away and lie down in the grass, as lions generally do: they stick to their work, eating and growling by turns till they are satisfied, then off they go to water.

It is well known that leopards are splendid climbers, but perhaps it would cause some surprise to know what great weights they will carry, or rather drag up, and deposit between the forked branches of convenient trees. I once found more than half the carcass of a large bushbuck ram so placed 12 feet from the ground, the probable weight being about 80 lb. Both varieties are equally at home amongst the branches; perhaps the hill-leopard more frequently ascends trees than does the others, his mode of life rendering it more necessary.

I have never known an instance of a leopard tackling a porcupine as a hungry lion will do, but they have no objection to a baboon if they can manage to get hold of him. I have heard it said, and fully concur in the opinion, that a leopard would scarcely be a match for a full-grown male baboon, unless he took him very much by surprise, and even a leopard would require to rise early to do that. But it is their combination in attack that renders these hideously quaint "satyrs of the rocks" so dangerous to their enemies. One would imagine that a tough old bush-pig would be an animal that a soft-skinned leopard would prefer to let alone; but, as I have described elsewhere, they occasionally tackle them, though they do not always come off victorious. Some Kafirs one day found a full-grown boar pig that had been killed by a single leopard, and took me to the spot. The spoor showed that it was the work of but one leopard. The boar was quite dead, having been evidently killed the previous night; and as portions of it were eaten, we inferred that the leopard had not been much injured in the struggle. The pig's neck was terribly torn and lacerated, and the lips at the return of the jaws on one side torn open, laying bare the cheek-bone. Death was caused by strangulation.

When chased on horseback in tolerably open country, leopards will turn and stand at bay very much quicker than will a lion under similar circumstances, though if a way of escape offers, through ever so slight cover, they will promptly take advantage of it to put as great a distance as possible between themselves

will be likely to follow him, and from further orders at my very ready, and into deep pools. A I with the greatest each patch of cover The same remarks lightning speed, and I think barely sufficient to invariably accompany them come on a could kill either a I think they would unless it was severely

country and give upon zoology though their statements leaves a good deal of chaff from before in my employ as many as six cubs cubs with their are young usually having two I have ever seen myself cubs. Three is, I born between October and years old hunt- ing them by their mother have the mother I am somewhat a leopardess years and I base my leopardess produced she very skillfully evaded her cubs: and in and had a shot At all I believe was the and in the very same spot

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and their pursuers. If a good tree is handy, they will be likely to run up it, especially if one has any dogs with him, and from this coign of vantage they snarl and swear till further orders at the excited pack below. They take to water very readily, and are good swimmers, plunging unhesitatingly into deep pools. A leopardess with cubs is an animal to be tackled with the greatest care: every precaution should be taken, and each patch of cover approached as if it certainly held the leopard. The same remarks apply to a wounded animal: they charge with lightning speed, and from the smallest bit of cover that one would think barely sufficient to cover a hare. The charge is almost invariably accompanied by hoarse grunts, though I have known them come on silently. I do not think that a single leopard could kill either a sable or roan antelope, or a giraffe, nor do I think they would attempt to tackle one of these animals unless it was severely wounded.

Any information the natives of a country can give upon zoological matters is worth making a note of, though their statements must be carefully sifted, as there is always a good deal of chaff with their wheat. I am told by a Swazi hunter in my employ that a leopardess on occasions will produce as many as six cubs in a litter, and that the number varies with their age, young leopardesses of three, four, and five years old usually having two cubs, and so on. The greatest number I have ever seen myself in a litter is four, and that on two or three occasions. Three is, I fancy, the usual number, and they are born between October and December. I have seen fully-grown cubs of two years old hunting with their mother, and only distinguishable from her by their lighter build. They more frequently, however, leave the mother when about this age, and hunt for themselves. I am somewhat inclined to believe that under certain circumstances a leopardess will produce three litters of cubs in two years, and I base my opinion upon the fact that in August 1889 a leopardess produced two cubs in a kloof close to my house. She very skilfully evaded all attempts to circumvent her and to capture her cubs; and in November of that year I saw a leopard with her, and had a shot at him, which I thought hit, but was probably mistaken. At all events, in April 1890 a leopardess, which I fully believe was the same one, gave birth to two more cubs, and in the very same spot

(amongst some boulders lying at the foot of a steep but low krantz) where the previous litter was brought forth. Upon this occasion I organised a big hunt, but again she proved one too many for us, though one of her last year's cubs, an animal about nine months old, was tackled and killed by my dogs. Now presuming that this was the same leopardess, and that, as would probably be the case, she would produce another litter in about February 1891, it would suggest the fact that they are decidedly prolific animals. Unfortunately I never again saw this leopardess—that is, to recognise her—so can only offer the suggestion.

In conclusion, I may say that the Kafirs, when asked about the different varieties of leopards, will answer, "Siya t' ati ; 'mihlobo yato 'mbili, kepa ti kanye-ke" ("We know them; they are of two sorts or kinds, but they are one"). This sounds like a "bull" when translated into English, but is perfectly comprehensible in their own language.

CHAPTER X.

HUNTING THE HILL LEOPARD.

Two old hands—The watcher watched—A family party—Regardless of appearances—Another raid—A plucky bitch—An inadequate weapon—Call a halt—Result of impatience—Mfafubana—Mutual surprise—Two beauties—Gone away!—An ancient musket—Missed!—Too late—Cup-board love—A heifer seized—Prepare for a night-watch—A bold attack—A weary vigil—Daybreak—A stampede—The leopard, by Jove!—Steady does it!—Pays the penalty—Regains the bush—Lost spoor—A plucky swim—Found dead—"Ku file 'mtakati!"—A monster—Mfafubana scores—Sheep carried off—An unprovoked charge—A short cut—Not at home—Kill abandoned—Further search—Another kill—Tying out a bait—Cock-tail ants—Blue-lights—Hard luck—Masters of the situation—Compensation—New plans—A cage in a tree—A quiet night—Result of excitement—The bait gone—A rocky kloof—Behind the screen—Tracked to their lair—A demonstration—My first move—A charge—Cartridges jam—The second leopard escapes—Following up a wounded one—Hide-and-seek—"Cooley" the boys—Reappearance—A savage charge—Be grateful for small mercies.

For the sake of distinctness, whilst describing the game found in the hill country, I shall treat in the following chapters of the bush leopard only—*i.e.*, the variety alluded to variously as the hill, bush, or kloof leopard—leaving the Low-Country animal to take its proper place amongst the game of that district. In the rough broken country around the kraal of the old Swazi chief to whom I have had occasion to make previous reference, leopards were particularly numerous and daring, the many deep dark kloofs and caverned krantzes affording them the desired shelter, and at least partial security from danger, and exactly suiting their marauding and stealthy habits. The natives always keep

large numbers of goats, and a good many dogs of the usual mangy, sharp-featured, prick-eared, weasel-bodied breed ; and as leopards are particularly partial to mutton and dog's meat, they necessarily had a "high time" of it in that district, wandering from one kraal to another, and hiding during the day in the dense kloofs, thus successfully baffling the best-laid plans for their destruction. Two of these animals in particular were as remarkable for their daring courage as for their enormous size, and I was naturally most keen to bring them to bag. Eventually we succeeded, but not until we had experienced many disappointing failures. Other leopards would pay a flying visit to a kraal, seize a goat, and be miles away next morning ; but these two—lulled to a sense of security by their long immunity from danger—simply haunted the kraals in the vicinity, and levied blackmail indiscriminately in the shape of goats, sheep, dogs, and occasionally a young beast. One of this pair, as the sequel will show, fell under the assegais of my native allies, the other to my rifle. Many and many a night had I sat up for them, sometimes by a kill, at others by a tethered goat, but all to no purpose. On one occasion I would certainly have had a shot but for the awkward position in which I was sitting : I could only fire at any object directly in front, and the leopards having seen me, evinced a decided dislike to tackling the bait until they had satisfied their curiosity as to the nature of the uncanny object perched in the tree overhead. Their actions certainly disconcerted me not a little, as they carefully kept behind, now and then uttering a very low rasping growl, as they crept warily about through the grass, feeling for the wind ; and it was lucky for me that they did not attempt to jump into the tree for a closer acquaintance, for my position then would have been far from enviable. Fortunately they were too suspicious to keep about the spot very long, and soon left for fresh hunting-grounds.

Some weeks passed, during which our spotted friends lived like fighting-cocks on the fat of the land, being seen in broad daylight on more than one occasion, and duly hunted up whenever they had been guilty of any extraordinary piece of impudence. Still they saved their hides, but their time was drawing near. One day I received news of their having been seen about three o'clock in the afternoon by some girls from the

'Mshatsha kraal who had been out cutting grass to repair an old hut. It was a hot day, and after working some hours the girls threw their sickles down and started off in a group to bathe in the clear stream which ran through the nearest kloof, not more than 200 yards from the kraal. They had left their very scanty raiment on the bank some 40 yards from the stream, and after their bath were walking up the slope towards the spot, laughing and chatting gaily as is the wont of these children of nature, when just as they reached the spot where their things lay, one of them uttered a cry, which drew the attention of the others to a pretty little family party of four leopards, two full-grown brutes and a couple of little cubs. They walked out of the bush not more than 30 yards distant from the girls, the one stopping for a moment or two to gaze with lowered head in their direction, then all trotted off over a low ridge and disappeared in another kloof. The poor girls were thoroughly terrified, and did not stop to look after them, but ran their hardest towards the kraal, some without even stopping to pick up their things—others, more fortunate, tying them on as they ran.

I acted at once upon the information they gave, but nothing came of it; nor upon the following day, when a hunting-party mustered in full force, were we any more successful—every kloof was drawn blank, at least as far as leopards were concerned. Next Sunday, however, these leopards killed four goats at the head kraal, two of which they dragged off into the bush. I happened to reach the kraal with "Dot"—a plucky bitch of mine—just as a quickly-formed punitive expedition left it, and though only armed with a light assegai, I joined their ranks, after sending a boy back for my rifle.

We followed the spoor rapidly through some nasty low thorn-bush till we found the remains of the goats, which the leopards had evidently left at an early hour. They had stopped to drink at a small spruit, and thence we followed them over very broken ground, across a high ridge, and down through some dense scrub on the other side. We gained more open ground at last, though the grass was long and matted, and the going consequently heavy. We were evidently drawing very close to our game, and I kept anxiously looking back to see if my rifle was coming; but there was no sign of the messenger, so we had to push on.

The leopards had crossed a succession of low broken ridges, and appeared to have been making for an extensive kloof which lay about a mile ahead of us; so we extended our formation at once, walking some thirty yards apart from each other, our right flank skirting the base of a long irregular krantz, and our left pushed forward on the plan of the native *impi*, and sweeping round the foot of each ridge in succession. Duikers and 'msumbi jumped out of the long grass and bush in front of the line, but we scarcely noticed them, as worthier game was before us.

At last but one narrow donga and a low burnt-off ridge separated us from the kloof in which we felt confident the leopards lay concealed, and we decided to halt and await the arrival of my rifle before making a further advance. I passed the word, however, for our two flanks to move forward slightly, so that our right should rest on the head of the big kloof and our left on some low, flat, marshy ground at its lower end. So far all had gone well enough, our plans could not have been better, and the leopards were certainly, we believed, within the "horns" of our *impi*; but, nevertheless, they were not to fall to rifle or assegai that day, perseveringly as we had spoorred them. My own unfortunate impatience spoiled the fun, and it happened thus. Whilst waiting on the ridge, I had called my bitch in, and handed her over to the charge of my right-hand man, 'Mfufubana, a fine powerful fellow, over 6 feet in height, who had everywhere earned for himself a name for reckless daring. Dot thus disposed of, I quietly walked forward to some large boulders cropping out of the long grass some 50 yards to our right front, and from the top of which I hoped to be able to see the boy coming with the rifle, and signal him to hurry up. The boulders were steep-to on the upper side, and I had to walk round to the lower side to get up. They formed a kind of hollow basin in their centre, in which grew some long coarse grass, and as I rounded the largest boulder, there, to my surprise—almost horror—not over twelve paces from me, lay one of the leopards on a shelf of rock, with its head slightly raised above its forepaws, and its yellow eyes fixed upon me with anything but a friendly glance. It was a magnificent brute, the largest and heaviest-looking bush leopard I have ever seen in my life, but I had not much time to take in any other particulars. I saw the other one lying amongst

the coarse grass in the hollow basin above, its body partly hidden by a scrubby bush growing out of a cleft in the rock. Why they had not endeavoured to get away on hearing us approach I cannot imagine; certainly, had they determined on attacking, they lost a grand opportunity. But whatever were their previous intentions, when they saw me they quickly enough made up their minds to retire. The seconds which elapsed seemed at least minutes to me ere they dashed out, giving vent to their displeasure in a succession of hoarse grunts of savage intensity: each of these, however, as it sounded farther away, considerably reassured me. I did not dare to attack or retreat, but I sprang to one side round the corner of a rock, though the one passed me so close, as it sprang with a great bound from the hollow cleft, that I am sure I could have touched it. They were into the narrow donga almost before the wild shout along the line announced that they were seen and heard. Springing up on to the rock, I shouted to 'Mfafubana to bring his musket, and then waited for the leopards to cross the burnt ground in front of me. What my feelings were I leave to the imagination, as the long-hoped-for opportunity of getting a shot at these two beauties by daylight presented itself, and my own trusty rifle miles away for all the good it was to me then, and in its place I held in my hands an old rusty weapon without a back-sight, and with a fore-sight as big as a church steeple; and loaded—heaven knows how! Closely pressed by the dogs, the leopards turned on them in the kloof, clawing Dot and some of the others badly, and then dashed out, with loud grunts, up the slope of the ridge. I ran my eye along the great clumsy barrel, and pulled—I might say tugged—the trigger. It jerked off, snapping the cap, while after an interval followed the report—and the recoil; and I had the mortification of seeing the dust fly up 30 feet behind the last leopard! The leopards quickly gained the big kloof, and climbing up into the great rocky caverns under the krantz, defied us—for neither cunning nor daring could dislodge them thence.

It was about a month after this event: I was sitting early one morning outside my hut, sipping a cup of coffee, and surrounded by a laughing, chattering crowd of girls and boys, joyously noisy as Africans ever are. The girls knew coffee-time well enough, and would not have permitted me to forget it, being aware that

sundry little packets of sugar occasionally found their way into their possession at such times ; so I seldom wanted for company ! Whilst we were thus chatting away, I heard voices talking excitedly near to one of the other huts, and upon making inquiries as to the cause, was informed that the two leopards we had hunted so long had been over to 'Mgazi's kraal, some two miles distant, and killed a heifer during the night. Nothing daunted by failure, I very quickly made arrangements to go over and watch the kill by night, as there was a good moon, and endeavour to settle our long-standing accounts. I found that the leopards had killed the heifer within 100 yards of the kraal. The cattle not having been driven in at night, they had chosen a temptingly sheltered spot in some long grass near the head of a kloof in which to sleep, and whilst lying there the leopards had attacked them. Having killed the heifer, they had dragged it into and some distance down the kloof, and eventually deposited it in a very dense patch of 'mcopi thorn-bush, surrounded by massive granite boulders, with a stream of water 20 feet distant, and there proceeded to do justice to the veal. Upon carefully examining the spot, I felt doubtful if the leopards would return, as the natives had tramped too much round about, and even interfered with the kill. However, I selected a tree with a conveniently forked branch on which to sit, and dragging the remains of the heifer from the thorn-bush, tied it to an old stump in the centre of a somewhat open space, distant 3 or 4 yards from the foot of the tree ; and then cautiously retired. At sundown, when the goats were brought in, and

“ Young and old in circle
Around the firebrands closed,”

and brown, naked little urchins gambolled round the empty cattle-kraal (the cattle were again left to sleep out) in all the joyousness of happy healthy childhood, and when the frugal contents of the earthen pots were bubbling and squeaking pleasantly on each hearth, I gave final instructions to my boys how to act, and pulling on my topcoat, and lighting up the old pipe, started off to keep my lone watch in the kloof. I carried a single '500 Express, and an old Kafir musket loaded with slugs—a very useful weapon with which to stop a charge.

The night passed wearily enough; it was cold and overcast, with heavy dark clouds driving across the moon, and rendering even objects close at hand invisible during most of the time. The many voices of the night served but to make the stillness more palpable; the ceaseless rustling of the trees swayed by the night wind, the creaking of branches, the heavy solemn flight of the great-eared owl—the weird '*sikova*'—over the tree-tops, uttering his mournful cry, "Whoo!!! whoo!! whoo!" and ever and again the friendly bark of some dogs at the kraal, telling that others than myself were on watch that night. Strange hushed sounds proceeded from the dark kloof, where ground-pigs and "dassies" pottered and scratched about amongst the dead leaves, and serval and genets sought their prey amongst the bushes; whilst bats, large and small, flew on rapid wings in mazy course through the trees, uttering occasionally their shrill notes. Once, and only once, I heard the sound of a stealthy tread as of some larger animal; and then with a deep hoarse bark a startled bush-buck dashed through the tangled brushwood to my right, and made for the open ground. Thinking that possibly he had winded the leopard, and that even now the latter might be close at hand, I peered more carefully than ever into the surrounding bush whenever the feeble moonlight struggled through the clouds; but no pale shadowy form rewarded my search, and cold grey morning broke at last, yet still my rifle lay unused across my knees. "Surely now there can be no risk of startling anything by striking a match," I muse. My numbed hands and feet decide me, and climbing down from the tree, I was not long in getting a small fire going and my pipe lit. I had scarcely drawn a decent whiff when on the ridge behind me that ran parallel with the kloof I heard a startled bellow, and a sudden noisy stampede of cattle. I took in the situation at once—nothing but their old enemy could cause cattle to sing out and stampede in that way, and at that time of the morning; so seizing my rifle, and leaving the old musket to keep the fire warm, I scrambled out of the bush, and gained the ridge in time to see some twenty head of cattle tearing along, heads down and tails up, towards the kraal, as though the devil himself was after them. I could but indistinctly make out objects at 200 yards, but as I ran down the ridge in the direction in which I had heard the bellowing, I

caught sight of a stealthy crouching form 120 yards distant on the other side of a narrow bushy donga which crossed the slope of the ridge. The leopard, by Jove! What a piece of luck! There she crouched, just on the edge of a little patch of burnt grass, her head turned towards the retreating cattle, which were now close up to the kraal, whence I distinctly heard excited voices proceeding. Stooping low, I quickly advanced to the edge of the donga, which lay between me and her. She now jumped to her feet, and trotted sullenly down the slope of the ridge towards the bush at right angles to my course. In the deceptive half-light she looked an enormous brute, and I could scarcely realise that she was actually now in my power, after all the wearisome days and nights spent in searching for her. Suddenly she saw me, as I moved a little to one side to get clear of a screen of low bush behind which I had advanced. She halted for a moment, looking steadily at me, then glanced up towards the kraal. Barely 80 yards now—"steady" does it! A gentle pressure upon the trigger, a sharp report, and long before the hanging smoke cleared away in the damp air, the dull "clop" of the bullet and deep savage growling of the leopardess told me that my aim had been true, and that one of the stealthy night-robbers had paid the penalty. Almost immediately following the shot, I heard a cock crow loudly up at the kraal, and then the noisy shouting of the boys; but I could not pay any attention to them, as the leopardess, after rolling about in the grass, growling loudly, regained her feet, and sprang off into the kloof before I could get another shot in. I ran back to get the old musket, and then set off down the kloof till I reached the spot where she had entered it. I only followed the spoor a short distance, as it led into some low thorny bush into which I could not have forced my way even if I had desired to, which I did not. I felt confident, however, that the brute was not far off, as the light-coloured blood on the spoor indicated a fatal wound, yet deemed it prudent to return to the kraal and get some boys together. There I had a long pull at a calabash of milk, and we then proceeded together to the bush where I had last seen the spoor. It did not take long to find out, however, that the leopardess had passed through this, and gone away down the kloof, throwing out large

gouts of blood from her mouth along the track, and apparently dragging one front-leg. Right to the banks of the river we followed her, and there all traces vanished. It seemed scarcely possible that she had deliberately taken to the water in her wounded condition, and succeeded in swimming across; but she certainly had attempted it. Unfortunately I was unable to remain, as I had some urgent business to attend to at the head kraal that day, and much time having been already lost, I decided to return at once—at the same time encouraging the boys to proceed with the search, by the promise of a reward to any one who should find the body that day, for dead I felt certain she must be.

With patient skill they again set to work after I left, carefully examining the banks of the river below, and the deeper pools, but, finding no trace of her, crossed through to the other side. There they found the spoor almost at once. She had swam through, a distance of 30 yards in a straight line, and nearer 50 yards by the diagonal course she took—and this, as we afterwards found, with a broken shoulder! Up the other bank she had crept, and through a strip of thick bush, in which, however, she had stood once or twice, and in one place appeared to have fallen, but making all the time for a rocky stronghold evidently well known to her. She reached it, but it was her last effort, for in attempting to leap a crevice between two rocks, about 9 feet wide, she had fallen to the bottom, dead, back down and legs in the air. My bullet, an expanding one of 590 grains, had smashed her near fore-shoulder, traversed one lung, and stuck in the ribs upon the other side. The boys skinned her, and brought the hide to me next morning with the grinning head and the paws attached. Far off I heard them advancing, the wild thrilling strains of a Swazi hunting-song rising and falling with varying modulations upon the clear morning air; and as they drew near, the waving plumes, white shields, and glittering assegais surrounding the tall athletic form of the one carrying the trophies, told their tale of success; and the cry was caught up by young and old at the kraal, as they went out to meet the hunting-party, “U yi bulele, ku file ’mtakati!” (“He has killed it, the evil spirit is dead!”)

A fortnight afterwards, during my absence, a hunting-party brought the male to bay in a big kloof—the same from which

the girls had seen them come out—my old friend 'Mfufubana claiming first blood with his wonderful musket. On this occasion three dogs were killed. It must have been an enormous brute. The chief pointed out the spot where it had been hung in a tree, the tail touching the ground, and the height was considerably over 8 feet. The hide, however, had been completely spoiled by bullet-holes and assegai-cuts, though it was still the finest I have ever seen. The leopardess I had killed was indeed no unworthy mate for this monster, the pegged-out skin being 8 feet 2 inches in total length. I have elsewhere endeavoured to show the utter unreliability of such a measurement in arriving at the actual length of the animal, and merely give it in this instance as it was the only one I was able to take; but I am convinced that, measured sportsman-style as she lay dead, she would have proved to be 7 feet 6 or 7 inches, a length exceeding by 9 inches that of any other leopardess I have shot, and within 2 or 3 inches of that of any male, whether in the hills or the Low Country. She was in splendid condition, as well she might be, for she represented the essence of much mutton! She was a striking example of the intermediate form of these animals. Of a rich dark colour, the rosettes on the back were partially run into each other, forming broken lines and bars, while those upon the sides were very open and distinct. We never found the cubs, though we searched well for them. At the time of her death the leopardess was dry.

Upon another occasion, shortly before I met with a serious accident in an encounter with a wounded leopardess, I succeeded in bringing to bag a particularly cunning specimen of the race. It was in the month of April 1889, a few weeks prior to my departure for the hunting-veldt. About four o'clock in the afternoon a Kafir came to me from a kraal just under the hill below my place, to inform me that the previous evening a leopard had carried off a native sheep from a spot close to his huts, and that he and some other boys, while searching for the remains, had found the leopard's spoor and followed it to a patch of bush at the bottom of a rough dry gully. He said it was still in the bush; that as they approached, it had charged them, though not coming beyond the edge of the bush; and content with having driven them off, it had retired again to the thickest part, where they believed the kill to be. Although it was very late in the after-

noon, and it seemed impossible for me to reach the spot and save daylight, I nevertheless took my rifle and belt, put two blue-lights into my pocket, and telling the boy to lead Rover, we set off at a sharp walk for the spot where he assured me we should still find the leopard. The path down the hill was fearfully rough and steep, leading through a dense and extensive bush all the way, in which we could with difficulty pick our steps, owing to the scrub and low thorny bush which grew thickly on either hand, and obstructed the footpath at every few yards. Slipping and stumbling, however, we at last reached the bottom, and at once struck away off to the left, the boy taking the lead, telling me he could reach the spot by a short cut through the bush and across to the gully. Here the going was worse than ever, for there was no semblance of a path or track, and I was continually getting hooked up by coat or breeches in the thorny creepers which everywhere barred our progress. In fact it became altogether too thick at last, and it was evident to me that the boy had lost himself—a fact which he soon admitted. After fooling about for an hour in this way, we succeeded in retracing our steps, though with difficulty, and at last reached an old mealie-garden, in which the Kafirs had picked the previous year, but was then deserted. By skirting this we soon came to the gully at the head of which the leopard was supposed to be lying. Notwithstanding all our caution, we must have given notice of our approach, because upon our reaching a low bank just above the patch of bush from which the brute had charged out at the boys, we could neither see nor hear anything of it. We immediately lit up a blue-light, and while it was still burning entered the bush. It was too thick and thorny to allow us to get in to where we could see the remains of the goat, so we left it, confident that the leopard was no longer inside. It was a very bad place for watching by night, so I abandoned that idea, and returned home.

At early dawn on the following morning I was again at the spot, but, as I had feared, the brute had not returned to his kill. The next three days were spent in strict search for this same animal, and examination of the spoor on different occasions satisfied us that it had been occasionally joined by another one, though they did not appear to hunt in company. On the afternoon of

the third day, however, we found the remains of a large bush-buck ram which had been visited on the previous evening, both leopards evidently having been at it. This was some clue, though very little. The carcass was almost entirely eaten, although it was possible that if the leopards had nothing else to fall back upon, they might again return to the scanty remains. I lost no time in going back home to fetch one of my own goats to tie out near the kill; and on arrival, sent a boy on with it at once down to the kloof, together with an ulster for my own wear during the night's watch. I remained behind to get some tea, and set out for the spot just before sundown. We tethered the goat to an old stump in the likeliest place I could find, close to the kill. A tree, growing about 30 feet away from this, appeared to offer the best chance of a shot, and I threw my coat into it, intending to take my seat between the two lowest forks. It was an uncomfortable seat at the best, especially when one had a 15-lb. rifle to hang on to all night, but there was no choice; all the larger trees were too far distant, though there was any quantity of thick scrub all round. The boy returned home, after receiving instructions to come down early in the morning with two dogs and a small kettleful of hot coffee, and I at once proceeded to make myself as comfortable as circumstances would admit, and to tie the blue-light in such a way that when lit it would throw its rays upon the goat and over the surrounding open space. To what degree of comfort I attained let those swarms of infernal little "cock-tail" ants—that streamed over me from head to foot during the space of an hour—say. I could not sit still for five minutes at a stretch, until the little wretches, having no more venom to dispose of, ceased their attacks; then cramp and "pins-and-needles" did their utmost to tire me out, till I thought the fabled tortures of Prometheus were as nothing compared to those I endured, for mine were very real. It ended in my going off into a doze, and when I awoke the moon was just setting. Glancing towards the bait, I saw that it was now standing up, at the extreme length of its tether, its forefeet set in front of it, and its head down, apparently keeping a steady strain on the line, but not struggling in the slightest, nor bleating. I was quite sure from its actions that the leopards were somewhere close at hand, and in my direction too, as the goat was dragging away from me, with its stern

towards the dead bushbuck. I cocked my rifle, and then felt an unaccountable inclination to turn round and have a look behind me; but the unwisdom of such a proceeding restrained me, and for fully ten minutes or so I waited and watched. Then the goat commenced to struggle slightly, and bleated twice—a low frightened cry. Peering into the gloomy bush around, I fancied I saw an object moving to my right, on a low ridge of stones covered with scanty bush; almost immediately I was sure of a slight rustling sound in that direction, and very cautiously raised my hand to the striker of the blue-light. A quick stroke across the ignition surface and it flared up, but simultaneously with the light, and before I had fairly grasped my rifle, came an angry startled “Woof, woof!” from below my tree, seeming to be within a very few feet of me, followed by the crashing sound of an animal bounding through the grass and scrub behind me, and of another making off through the bush below the stony ridge, and next moment I was left alone, with the blue-light still flaring, and the now frantically struggling goat. It was hard luck, and I believe that, but for the leopard beneath my tree, I would have got a shot at the other. I have usually found that both lions and leopards stand well for a blue-light, provided they are not too close when it is lit up: of course it will not be for long, but time enough to get in a quick shot. These hill leopards are far more apt to spring off at once than the other variety, owing doubtless to the fact that they connect an artificial light of any kind with the idea of danger, from a long and close study of man and his ways.

The leopards did not return, but a search in the morning disclosed the fact that both of them had been at the foot of the tree, one eventually going away towards the stony ridge, where he was standing when disturbed by the light; the other had made a regular “seat” in the grass below the tree. They had doubtless crept up while I slept, intending to attack when the moon was down; so I lost my chance by lighting up a little too soon. They had again proved themselves masters of the situation, but I was only the more eager to compass their destruction; and had they but known it, they had very little cause for congratulation, seeing that the hours of one of them at least were rapidly drawing in. Two boys turned up in the morning, and

after I had got outside of the coffee, and had offered the goat a piece of tobacco to chew, as compensation for his night's suffering—and which he gratefully accepted—I began making other plans. I instructed one of the two boys to set to work, with some others that I intended to send down at once to his assistance from the house, and cut down a number of thorny trees, with which to build a small but substantial kraal in the bush, somewhat higher up in the kloof, and on the drop of a long ridge, leading down through the bush from the higher ground above. In the meanwhile I returned home with the other, and sent down the promised assistance to the one whom I had left, in the shape of half-a-dozen more boys. On the way up to the house I saw an 'msumbi ram, which I knocked over with one of the 2½-ounce bullets intended for the leopards. This was very lucky, as it gave me bait, and, as it turned out, led eventually to my success. After having something to eat, I returned to the bush to inspect the work, which was quite satisfactorily performed; so I at once sent the boys back again to the house, telling them to bring an empty gin-case and a piece of line, also some bread and coffee for my own consumption, and to drive a dozen or more of my own goats back with them through the bush, towards the kraal they had just completed.

They returned to me about 3 P.M., and I then accompanied them for a good round of the bush, driving the goats before us, and visiting most of the likely spots in which I thought the leopards might be lying. This plan is frequently very successful in bringing leopards to the rifle, especially if a kid is *carried* by one of the boys who are driving, and made to bleat occasionally by pinching its ear. The goats should be driven through the bush just about sundown. Returning to the kraal, we let the goats feed about till dusk, and in the meantime lashed the gin-case in between the four forked branches of a fine red pear-tree growing on the steep bank of a very rough stony kloof, along the bottom of which ran a considerable stream. To this kloof we had often succeeded in spooring the leopards, but the stony nature of the ground always prevented our getting on farther with it. We then secured one of the little goats—whose mother was amongst the troop—in the gin-case, carefully lashing it inside so as to prevent its jumping out, and hung half of the 'msumbi

on a low bush, tying it there with a piece of riem. The nearest point of the kloof in which we placed this bait was about 300 yards distant from the goat-kraal, in which at dusk we made all the goats securely fast. When I had fixed two blue-lights in a convenient spot, everything was ready for the night; and after we had eaten some supper, we all rolled ourselves up in our blankets inside the kraal, with the exception of one boy, whom I placed on watch beside me, telling him to wake me if anything stirred; and if not, to wake me in any case when the moon was going down. I was feeling very tired, and not even the constant bleating of the kid and its mother, that most annoying of sounds, kept me awake. When at last the boy roused me, it wanted about half an hour to the moon setting, so I gave him a "nip" of whisky and let him go to sleep, while I took the watch. Dawn, and nothing had approached the kraal; so I woke up one of the boys, telling him to rouse the others and come if I called, but not otherwise, and then crept quietly out of the kraal, and made across through the bush in the direction of the kloof where the kid was tied up. I had thoroughly examined the ground upon the previous day, and had discovered a convenient opening in the bush through which I could approach the bait from above, and which would enable me to come suddenly upon the spot without being seen by any animal that might be lying or moving about on the rocks below, until I was within easy range. By this path I now approached, with rifle on full cock. How sharply and distinctly every sound seems to fall upon the ear under such circumstances! The merest twig snaps with a report like a pistol-shot, the dry leaves crackle like burning reeds, and every tiny stone or piece of gravel scrunches underfoot as if one was treading on eggs. It is the intense excitement that causes it, the nerves being strung up to such a pitch that any sudden sound jars upon them, and is increased by the imagination a hundredfold. I fancy every sportsman but those whose nerves are of cast-iron must know what the sensation is. It is quite different from "buck-fever," as that is intensified by the sight of the game, whereas this usually vanishes completely when the game comes in sight. At last through the bushy screen I could make out the box

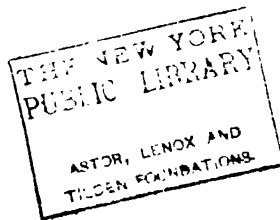
in which the kid had been tied, and a glance assured me it had not been interfered with. But that proved nothing; it is but seldom a hill leopard will meddle with so evident a trap on the first night, but if they have heard the kid bleating, they should be somewhere near at hand.

Creeping yet nearer, and carefully examining the branches overhead, I gained the edge of the kloof, and with straining eyes looked down on the huge piles of boulders and rocks, matted scrub and twisted tree-stems, to try and catch a glimpse of the game. Nothing—all is gloomily silent, grey, and cold! But stay! surely that is the little bush upon which I hung the half of the 'msumbi, now broken down, and the bait nowhere visible! The loosely hanging riem satisfied me I was not mistaken, and that nothing now remained to be done but to take up and hold the spoor. "Shall I creep quietly back and call the boys?" I thought; but an instant's reflection decided me against that plan. Time was an object, and it was rapidly getting light; besides, the few boys I had would not have sufficed to surround or drive the kloof. It seemed far better to follow the spoor alone as far as I could; and if beaten, then would be the time to call for assistance. Quietly removing both my shoes, I clambered down over some rocks and the sloping side of a great '*sidwala*, and advanced towards the bush. Yes, the bait was gone beyond question, but where were the robbers? With every sense on the alert, I scanned carefully each boulder and patch of bush within sight that might be sheltering the leopards. There was no spoor visible. The ground being strewn with rocks, the leopards could have walked along them for a great distance, but it seemed likely that lower down the spoor might be found. Picking my way amongst the boulders, and carefully avoiding all dead branches, I advanced slowly. To the right a large portion of the bank had become detached by the summer rains, and had fallen into the kloof, the great gap thus formed being filled with a mass of thorns, creepers, and low dense scrub. It looked so likely a place in which to find a leopard that I at once edged away quietly towards it. Just at the corner of the gap, where the stones were more scattered, I saw that which amply repaid me for all my trouble, for the spoor of two leopards was visible in the damp sand, deeply imprinted, and making straight for the bushy tangle

within the gap. This became exciting, and I stared hard towards the centre of the gloomy bush; but my eyes were not equal to the task. I listened—all was still! If only I could have seen through the thickest part of the leafy screen, barely 20 feet from where I stood, I should have known that there lay a long crouching form upon the damp ground, its head upon outstretched paws, the ears flattened, the yellow eyes glaring half in fear, half in defiant anger, and the black twitching lips drawn back, disclosing the white teeth and red gums; just above and behind, yet another, lying near a quantity of half-picked bones, and directly facing me as I stood irresolute at the entrance to the gap. But all was dark and still, and they gave no sign: they would not hasten a fight, but neither would they refuse one if forced into it. I was puzzled how to act. The spoor very clearly indicated that the leopards had entered this gap, but as yet I was not certain whether they had left it; so, as it was unwise to enter the bush from below, the best plan appeared to be to retrace my steps, climb out of the bank, and skirt the head of the bush to try and cut the spoor. Before doing so, however, it was just worth while crossing to the lower corner of the gap, as the leopards might have gone out there and headed down the kloof. Lowering the hammers to half-cock, I stepped quietly aside towards a large rock, intending to get on to it and have a look round, but just then a very low ugly growling became audible that anywhere else but in that dark and silent kloof would have passed unheard. Evidently the leopards had taken my sudden movement as signifying danger to themselves, and evinced their displeasure by their low rasping growls. I stood fast, very quietly turning round to where the sound appeared to issue from—a spot nearly abreast of me, at the upper end of the gap. But the growling ceased suddenly, and, though I looked long and earnestly, I could make nothing out. I was intensely excited, for I knew that we were at very close quarters, and that in all probability the leopards would make a fight of it, seeing that they had not attempted to escape when they had ample opportunity. I now stepped quickly back to the rock just behind me, but keeping my face towards the bush: it seemed my chances of a shot would be better from that place, in case the leopards came out. Again the low growling, ceasing, how-



“For the life of me I could not get the empty shells out of the rifle.”



ever, when I stopped at the rock, and then for an instant I caught a very indistinct glimpse of an object moving in the bush. It was lost immediately, but in another moment I clearly made out the outline of a leopard much lower down in the bush than I had been looking, and right in under the bank, which overhung considerably at that spot. I dare not lose the advantage that the first move would give me, and stooping down to enable me to see under a dark line of bush which partially hid the leopard's body, I could see the brute distinctly, lying quarter-face to me, its head raised slightly above its paws. Taking careful aim, I gently pressed the trigger. The report of the heavy rifle in the rocky kloof was tremendous, and the deep hoarse growls of the leopards freezing in their intensity. I could not see through the smoke, yet felt instinctively that the one was coming out at me, and I at once dodged down behind the sheltering rock and let rip the other barrel at a long yellow object as it shot down the space between the bush and the rock. It fell in a heap upon the sand a few feet from me. Yet I could see she was not dead, as she struggled violently, and glared savagely round, keeping her tail erect and stiff; but for the life of me I could not get the empty shells out of the rifle, and had to use the extractor hanging at my belt. But before the other cartridges were in, the leopardess by a violent effort recovered herself, and jumped into some thick bush growing in profusion upon what, when the summer's floods poured down the kloof, had been a miniature island, formed by the *débris* washed away from the terraces, and deposited behind enormous boulders many tons in weight. With the rapid development common to all tropical nature, grass, scrub, and bush had sprung up upon this formation, and great snake-like creepers hung round it, and twined through its tangled brakes,—

“ Their humid arms festooning every tree.”

With a side-glance I had noticed the second leopard spring out on to the bank overhanging the spot where the one had been lying; it had then crossed the gully and entered the rocks piled up on the other side, but I had no means of ascertaining whether it was still there or had gone off. I might have called the boys then, but feared to frighten the leopard away by shouting, and if

I went myself to call them the brute would probably slink away and give us no end of bother to come up with her. So climbing on to a boulder with a handful of small stones, I threw them into the cover, only to be answered by a low growl as each fell into the patch close to where she lay. Believing her disabled, I made up my mind then to go in after her, but thought it best to give her a quarter of an hour's grace, whilst I went back for my shoes. When up on the bank of the kloof I changed my mind, and cooeied low for the boys, but they most unluckily failed to hear me, notwithstanding they had distinctly heard my shots, otherwise I think the day's sport would have had a different termination. Seeing that none of them turned up, I advanced cautiously to the bush with my rifle at the ready, and parting the bushes slightly, had a look in. As I did so a quick low grunt came from the far end of the bush, and the leopardess rushed out. I ran quickly round to the other end, only to find that the brute had gone into another strip on the other side of the gully, and I further noticed that the spoor showed she was going on three legs only. From this spot we commenced a most annoying game of hide-and-seek, the leopardess creeping away from bush to bush, but never showing herself in the open. Once she moved away in front of me from a patch of grass and scrub, in which she had lain so closely that I might have trodden on her, and I am sure she would have charged then, but for the fallen branch of a tree which lay between us, and behind which she had been hiding. I saw her ugly snarling face as she looked up for a second, but there was no time to get in a shot—she had vanished in the bush instantly. At last she turned out of the kloof and crossed a narrow open spur into the next one. I followed her blood-tracks through the grass, and found she had got down through a small opening in the thick bush, where I could not follow her. Indeed this kloof was a frightful one, the thorny creepers so interlaced backwards and forwards, and presenting such an array of points in every direction, that I dared not attempt to follow her farther into it. I more than ever regretted then that I had no dogs with me, for they would certainly have brought her to bay on the spot.

I now cooeied loud and long for the boys, but still heard no answer, so I walked up along the edge of the kloof till I reached a spot just above where the leopardess had entered it, and seeing

that the bank just there sloped off at an easy gradient towards the kloof, I stood for a few moments looking down on to the bush beneath, when I heard a distant cooey away beyond the other kloof. Looking quickly up, I noticed a something moving through the scrub on the ridge, considerably higher up than I was, and apparently coming down towards me from the direction of the kloof I had just left. It stopped for an instant as another "cooey" rang out—this time from a spot much nearer—then quickly moved on again, but at right angles to its former course. Something about its movements made me think it was a leopard,—it certainly was not a buck of any kind, or its head and neck would have shown above the grass; and as I noticed an old many-limbed tree growing out of the sloping bank close to me, I ran to it and climbed on to the lowest branch, thinking to see better over the scrub. Scarcely had I obtained a footing on the bough, when I heard a rustle in the scrub under the bank, and next moment with open snarling mouth the wounded leopardess charged up the bank straight at me. It was so unexpected, and I was standing so awkwardly, that it was with difficulty I got my rifle up and fired into her face. The bullet, of 2½ ounces solid, caught her in the lower jaw, which it smashed to fragments and passed downwards into her chest. She reared up on her hind-legs, clawing about in the air with her unwounded forearm. I gave her the left barrel fair in the chest, and she rolled down the bank all of a heap, stone-dead. A few minutes afterwards the boys came up, and we went together to the spot where I had seen the object in the long grass: by the spoor we saw that it had, after all, been a leopard, undoubtedly the mate of the one that now lay dead; but he had gone off at a run, and though we followed the spoor for three hours, failed to come up with him. He had probably moved away in the first instance from the shouting of the boys—for though I had heard but two cooeys, they said they had shouted frequently—and his departure was doubtless hastened by the two shots which I fired at the leopardess.

He must have been mightily surprised when, thinking he had left the danger behind him in the first kloof, he came so suddenly upon the renewed firing in the next. Anyway, we had achieved partial success, and upon returning to where we left the leopardess,

we skinned her off, and went back to our temporary kraal, releasing the poor hungry little kid on our way.

It was dark before we reached home that night, driving the goats before us, and feeling well satisfied with the success of our carefully arranged plans. Had I taken the dogs early that morning when I left the goat-kraal they would assuredly have bayed both the leopards in the first kloof; still it was a good bit of excitement as it was, and one must feel duly grateful for any success in this branch of sport, seeing how easy and frequent failure is.

The leopardess was a fine beast, measuring 6 feet 3 inches, and with a shoulder height of 2 feet 4 inches.



Hill leopards sunning themselves.
View from the Krantzes above the Rij Kopjes.

CHAPTER XI.

HUNTING THE HILL LEOPARD (*continued*).

Stealthy retreat when disturbed—Leopards plentiful—Enter the stable—Doubtful gain—A little Tartar—"Silwan 'si 'ngenile 'sibayeni!"—An awkward mistake—A plucky pointer—Victim to the tsetse—Found where least expected—Morning romps—An easy chance—A double surprise—Favourite spots—A wary bird—Close quarters—Knocked out—Head shots unreliable—Watching in a pig-run—Voices of night—Revellers of the night-world—A keen sportsman—Under the moon—A dead shot—Failures enhance the pleasures of success—Extensive forests—Wandering leopards—Meat a consideration—No wish to bag a Kafir—A fine ram—"Confound those dogs!"—An easy prize—Two leopards and one cartridge—A collapse—Forethought—"St, baas!"—Another leopard shot—A surprise—A lucky day's sport—Leopardess and cub—Skulls of the Felidæ—Nogwaja—Baboons give warning—"He's down!"—A shot in the kloof—Difference of opinion—Young

and inexperienced—Breaking bay—A true prophet—A spring at the krantz—Examine his jaws—Could not wait—A large hill leopard—A pair visit 'Mgiyo's—Follow them up—Funking it—"That's the leopard!"—Leave my post—First blood—Treed—A *mêlée*—Crippled—How it happened—Fairly earned—Mahlatswa again—To remember him by.

NOTWITHSTANDING the fact that in districts which are favourable to the existence of these Felidæ they are usually very numerous, yet there is no animal which is less frequently seen or more difficult to find when sought for. This is due partly to its retiring habits, its small size, and the rapidity and ease with which it creeps away through very slight cover; also to the fact that when disturbed it does not spring suddenly up and bound away, but steals off in the most silent manner imaginable; so that there is not the slightest doubt that one who is constantly hunting in and around kloofs where they are plentiful very frequently disturbs them, but is ignorant of the fact, as they have stolen away without giving any sign. Naturally, if one comes suddenly and closely upon them, the surprise is mutual, and the animal bounds noisily away, uttering short hoarse grunts, and no less scared than its disturber. Living for a long time as I have done actually amongst them—the homestead being situated on a long ridge or spur, from both sides of which heavily-wooded kloofs run off to the lower ground, and these kloofs being well stocked with small game, thus offering to leopards the three great desiderata of existence, water, food, and dense cover—I have had many and exceptional advantages of making their acquaintance. Yet for all that I do not now see a leopard more than once a-month on an average; though when I first came to the spot they were far more plentiful, and being bolder, were more frequently seen. At that time scarcely a night passed but I heard their low deep "goom! goom!" in one kloof or another, and sometimes on both sides at once; and it was quite a common occurrence to find in the neighbouring kloofs the feet, horns, and other remnants of luckless pigs and bucks which had fallen victims to the terrible fangs and claws of these beautiful cats; and I have myself been no inconsiderable loser in stock, to gratify their insatiable appetites. Although they are the wariest and most stealthy of the Felidæ, yet with it all, as I have shown, they are at times incredibly daring. So surely as I leave home

for a day or two, they know all about it, especially if my dogs are away with me; and then good-bye to any luckless sheep or goat that happens to be left outside the kraal at night! Not that a kraal is always a safeguard, for they will take the highest at a leap (though far preferring to creep in through the interstices), and once inside, they are smart and skilful butchers. One year whilst I was away in the hunting country a leopard actually entered the stable, dragged out a buffalo bull's hide, and cleared to the bush with it; but upon examining his prize, he evidently thought that possibly more tasty and succulent things exist in this world than buffalo-hide, stripped from its owner three months back, so he declined it, omitting the thanks.

Shortly after first taking up my residence in this locality, I witnessed some most daring acts on the part of leopards. Not having been much hunted, they became most impudent, and at that time they had not ascertained the only terms upon which I would permit them to take away an occasional goat or sheep from me. And after all, if they are losers in one way, they have had the best of the bargain, for I have long since found out, in the words of the old distich, that

"It often does befall,
He who conquers loses all!"

Indeed, if I had not been the fortunate possessor of some good dogs—I do not refer to breed, but "good" as possessing sagacity, endurance, scent, and indomitable pluck; in fact, all those qualities most desired in his canine companions by one who is fond of leopard-shooting—there is no saying in what their audacity would have culminated.

On the night of September 27, 1887, a leopard crept up the kloof at the back of the house, and distant about 150 yards, passed the stable—in which, unfortunately as it happened, my dogs had been shut up—and going to a small thatched building behind the house, where the kids and lambs were put during the night, coolly walked one off into the kloof, left it, and returned shortly after for another. I should state that I had a number of bags of mealies (maize) stacked in the house on one side, and the young kids, after the manner of their kind, used constantly to climb on top of them, and I have little doubt the leopard caught

them there, as there was no spoor in the house, but we could see that he had reared up with his forefeet on the top of the half-door, whence he could easily clutch the little things as they stood petrified with terror on the sacks.

It is a mystery to me how he got hold of the first kid, unheard: evidently his was the wisdom of the serpent, for he was wise enough to do nothing to rouse all hands up, and instead of killing right and left on the spot as usual, he seemed bent on abstracting them one by one. Unfortunately for the success of his plans, the second one he collared was an uncommonly stiff-built little fellow, a regular "Tartar," full of kick and struggle, and with such a pair of lungs that it was not long before we knew all about it. I rushed out rifle in hand, under "bare poles," and along the waggon-road, in the direction taken by the leopard, the kid singing out lustily all the while. The dogs, however, had made a passage out of the stable for themselves somehow, and rushed to the attack in a body. Quick as I was, I was too late for the scrimmage, for ere I reached the spot I met the goat pegging back homewards as fast as its little legs could carry it, and quite regardless of the fact that it was the hero of the hour. Old Swift had made the leopard drop his find, although he received a nasty wound in the flank from the brute's claws. The other dogs were barking lustily in the bush, and I went in after them; but what little moonlight there was was quite insufficient to light up the deep gloom of the thorny kloof, so I cried off, and called the dogs back. We found the kid first killed, in the morning. The second one is alive to this day, now a fine old "billy," very self-opinionated, and an authority on leopards: you do not often catch *him* outside the kraal of a night. He had been very slightly hurt by the leopard, but was covered with saliva from the brute's jaws. We hunted the kloof systematically next day, but the wily animal had probably expected as much, and was not at home.

For the first few months that I lived in these parts my dwelling-house was a little grass-covered shanty, built in the native style, the boys' hut being behind it, about a dozen yards away under a small grove of trees. The cattle and goat kraals were about 40 yards distant from my hut to the left, and the two kraals adjacent one to the other. I used to keep my

rifles suspended by straps from the circular roof, and it was my custom to hang the cartridge-belt of each over the stock of its own rifle; but on the night to which I refer a mistake had been made somehow, and they had been changed. After an hour's reading I put out the light about 11 p.m., and was just dropping off to sleep when I heard an unusual commotion in the cattle-kraal, and, going to the door, called to one of the boys to know what was causing it. "Oh, it's nothing, sir," he answered; "only the cattle pushing one another about." So I lay down again, only for about five minutes though, when a general farmyard disturbance took place—cattle bellowing, sheep and goats bleating, and the fowls, which used to roost upon the kraal-fence, cackling and fluttering noisily. "Puma, baas; 'silwan 'si 'nge-nile 'sibayeni!" ("Come out, sir; there's a wild animal in the kraal!") shouted Muntumuni, excitedly. I was out in a jiffy with my '500 Express and the belt of cartridges that was hung on the stock, and, telling a boy to bring a light, ran over to the kraal. I saw that the rumpus was amongst the sheep and goats, but, as it was rather a dark night, could make out nothing plainly, only a vari-coloured mass of living creatures huddled up against the thorn fence nearest to me, and a lightish-looking object in the far corner. All this occurred in a few seconds, and in the hurry and excitement I had been trying to get cartridge after cartridge into the rifle, and as each refused to enter, had discarded it. It never dawned upon me at first that I could possibly have taken the wrong belt; but so it was, and I was trying to fit bottlenecked Martini-Henry cartridges into the breech of a '500 Taper Express. "Never mind the light," I shouted to Muntumuni, as he came running up with a half-lighted, flickering fire-stick; "bring my other belt!" I could then make out the leopard creeping low along the side of the fence inside, and in hopes of getting him to stand for a moment, I ran round to that side of the kraal; but before the boy came up with the cartridges, the brute rushed against the fence and broke through, landing within 10 feet of me. At this moment my plucky little pointer Sabi rushed up, and without a moment's hesitation flew at the leopard. I mentally said "Good-bye, Sabi," when the leopard, with one blow of its terribly armed paw, laid the poor little fellow on his back star-gazing, with a serious scalp-wound and

one eye hanging half out. The boy came up, and I snatched a cartridge from him and fired a chance shot at the leopard—but without effect—as he bounded off towards the nearest kloof. The following day I got some boys together and tried to hunt him up; but he had evidently anticipated pursuit, and cleared out, none the worse for his daring raid. Four goats and two sheep lay dead in the kraal, and we found the “seat” in which the leopard must have lain, outside, under the fence, watching for his opportunity to attack; and in this spot he must have remained for a considerable time, as the bush was trampled flat. Sabi ultimately recovered, but never regained his old pluck. If wanted on occasions to help look up a lion or leopard, his eyes answered, as did a certain South African celebrity when a similar proposal was put to him, “Well, I’ve not lost any lions, so I don’t intend to go and look for any.” Poor Sabi! he was another victim to the tsetse-fly. One of the keenest bush-dogs I ever had, and possessed of indomitable energy, you could never tire him out. I did not use him for birds, as I always shot with a rifle; but he was very steady, and I have seen a great many birds shot over him by my friends.

My experience has been, that one is far more likely to come across leopards unexpectedly in places where they are plentiful than to find them by searching, as in the latter case they seem to know instinctively when a beat is organised for their especial benefit, and, given time and opportunity, a leopard will defy the best hunting-party ever got together to find him. It is seldom any use to think “What a fine place to turn a leopard out of!” You may be sure he is not there; but if you see a branch heavy with ripe fruit upon a tree growing out of a cleft in some rocks, and, laying your rifle down, climb up to gather some—“Woof, woof!” and out jumps the brute from under your feet. Some of the incidents related in this and following chapters go to prove that for every leopard sought for and found, half-a-dozen are met with quite unexpectedly.

At a certain time of the year, just when the young grass is springing up on the lately-burnt ridges close to my house, it is not at all an uncommon thing to see a couple of leopards playing about in the open patches between the bushes just about sunrise. I have watched them frequently with my glasses thus skylark-

ing in the early morning: they will remain out till about an hour after sun-up, and then retire to the kloofs. Only upon one occasion, however, have I been successful in bagging a leopard thus seen on the same day: either they hear one approaching, or you arrive too late at the spot and find the animals have cleared off. On the day I refer to I saw a pair of them racing about on a very open ridge, and I hurried to the spot as quickly as possible. I had a good boy with me, and when we ascertained they were no longer there, he suggested waiting awhile in a clump of bush, close to which we had seen the leopards playing. We were not seated a quarter of an hour when a fine male bounced out of the narrow kloof to our right, and came up the slope towards us, uttering playful purring growls, and without the slightest idea of our presence. He was less than 20 yards distant when I fired and floored him: he died without a kick. The boy pulled my arm and eagerly directed my attention to what I thought was a bunch of yellow leaves, about 60 yards away, in a patch of scrub just across the kloof. He insisted that it was the other leopard; I was equally positive it was not; and so I lost a grand chance, for as I stood up, the leopardess, as it must have been, sprang out and disappeared over the low ridge. I sent a shot after her, but it probably only induced her to run the harder.

An almost certain find, sooner or later, is in any open yet retired spot in the bush frequented by them where the large flat granite rocks—the '*sidwala*' of the natives—crop up to the surface. Such places will invariably be found covered with their dung, and there they love to lie stretched out on the rocks, basking in the warm rays of the morning sun, until quite a late hour. But to find is one thing, to get a shot another, for they are ever marvellously wakeful and alert, and spring to cover on hearing the slightest noise; and it is most difficult, even if one knew exactly where they were lying, to advance silently through the thick bush. One day, the 14th April, two years ago, I was trying to shoot a specimen of the beautiful green-necked touracou, the '*igwalagwala*' of the natives, armed with a 10-bore shot-gun, with a charge of 1½ ounce AAA, for they are uncommonly tough birds, and wary withal, judging with considerable accuracy the range of a smooth-bore. This particular one led me a fine dance

through the bush, flying from tree to tree through the dark kloofs, every now and then uttering his loud though mellow cry, "Kor-o, kor-o, korro-korro-korro!" I lost sight of him at last in a small kloof, close to the upper end of which a large '*sidwala*' cropped up, and sloped down on the one side towards some thickish cover on the edge of the kloof. I stepped up on to this stony platform—it was 40 feet or more across—to have a look round, but my bird had vanished; so lowering the hammers of the gun, I turned to retrace my steps, when I noticed something move in the kloof below me. It was but a glimpse, and I could make out no shape whatever; but I stepped forward a pace or two, cocking the gun again, and next moment a leopardess, which I could see was heavy in young, walked out of the bush and quietly started climbing up the rock on which I stood. Not twenty paces separated us, but she never saw me until I raised the gun, when she stopped, and turning her head, looked hard at me. I pulled off both barrels at once, taking at her head: she fell forward, recovered herself, rushed round two or three times in a circle, growling hoarsely, and then, to my relief, jumped off into the bush. I breathed more freely when she was gone, as there had been no time to extract the empty shells from my gun and put in fresh cartridges, so she could have made it hot for me had she not been so thoroughly knocked out of time by the double charge. This beast I also failed to bag, though I followed her immediately I had reloaded, and when the spoor became indistinct called boys to assist me. We worked hard all day on the spoor, but in vain. For the first 200 yards or so she had blundered up against the trees and bushes, and in one place fallen heels over head down a steep bank; but the bleeding ceased farther on, and she had kept a very straight course all the time, making for the dense jungle under the hill, where I have so often had to say good-bye to wounded leopards.

I feel certain, however, that there is a one-eyed leopardess knocking about this district somewhere, and probably she has a tile loose too, for one can hardly put 3 ounces of shot into any soft-skinned beast about the head, at twenty paces, without deranging its intellect somewhat! To the fact that she was partially blinded and stunned I probably owe my escape from

an unpleasant predicament. But head shots are always unreliable, even with a rifle, and should be avoided if possible.

Quite as unexpected a meeting was the following—the result, however, being more fortunate for me. I had been watching several nights by moonlight for a shot at bush-pigs, which had been doing incalculable harm amongst the Kafirs' mealies, and in a week had brought four to bag. I shall have more to say upon the subject of night-shooting later on, and claim absolution for the time being. The moon upon this occasion was just a day past the full, so I had not long to wait in darkness. I took up my position shortly after sundown, having selected the upper part of a rather narrow, wooded kloof—which I had not hitherto tried—in which to keep watch. For three nights a troop of six or eight pigs had come and returned by the same kloof, so that their path was quite well worn. The kloof was about 50 yards wide where I stood, but it narrowed lower down till it became a mere bush-fringed donga with a small stream at the bottom. The banks were high and abrupt, and the spot I had chosen was under a small krantz, about 16 feet above the level of the bottom of the kloof, and only a few paces distant from the pigs' run. This spot offered great advantages, as I could sit in under the rocks in dark shade with the moon at my back and facing the run, while if anything passed up or down the kloof it would move in the almost full glare of the light, the trees overhead forming but a very slight screen; and as the low bush was thick and thorny, it was about the last place in which a pig would expect to meet with his *atra cura*—his two-legged enemy—at night, being more accustomed to regard with suspicion the watch-huts and shooting-holes in the mealie-lands. From the upper end of the kloof on the ridge above to the Kafir gardens was a distance of about 400 yards, the only piece of comparatively open ground that the pigs would have to travel over, but which I intended to prevent some of them at least from reaching.

When one is on the move late at night, and, coming to the edge of some dark kloof, stands for a minute or two listening, how still, painfully still, everything seems to be in the mysterious night-world around him! Not a sound falls upon the ear save, perhaps, the everlasting humming of the ubiquitous mosquito and the jarring notes of the cicada. It is the silence of sleep, one

would say of death. But if watching on such a night, and amidst such surroundings, how different is the effect; one then becomes, as it were, an integral part of this night-world. He is conscious of never-ending sound; voices are everywhere; birds, frogs, crickets, beetles, and other creatures innumerable, one after another and all together, help to swell the chorus of the night. The apparently sleeping world is in reality awake, alive with sound; for it is now peopled with other beings. Those of the day have retired, their allotted task performed, and now come

“ Things that hate the garish sun,
To frolic now the day is done.”

One world sleeps, but life, wakeful life, possesses that other of which we form a part; earth and air, stream, bush, and kloof, all are awake; the guard is but relieved and the night-sentries are on duty. At sunset most of the birds were hopping busily around after their evening meal, or seeking a secluded spot whereon to roost for the night; the mellow-voiced touracous retired to the darkest depths of the wood; the clucking francolins called loudly to each other from the low bushy scrub; the quaint *hahdedahs*, with harsh discordant cries, flew home from their feeding-grounds to their perches on the highest *'msenga*-trees; the shrill-voiced galagos—the “night-apes” of the Boers—screamed far down in the kloofs; then one by one the stars come out,

“ And the fireflies wink and darkle,
Crowded swarms that soar and sparkle
And in 'wilderer escort gather; ”

great moths fly forth, and heavy-winged beetles; the night-jar on swift erratic wings skims over the grass-tops; while bats, who have relieved the swallows on duty, flit about, pursuing their prey with untiring energy and determination. Then comes the great-eared owl, who

“ Invokes with fitful song
The phantom train of superstition's brood.”

King of the night, he sails on silent pinions above the tree-tops, startling the listeners with his weird “Whoo!!! whoo!! whoo!” In the kloofs all manner of “familiar” rustle and patter amongst the dead leaves, while now and again the rough “goom! goom!”

of the prowling leopard sounds ominously close. But now the night's Queen asserts her sway, her silvery light spreads over the sky's dark blue, the dew-besprinkled tree-tops sparkle with lustrous gems; yet higher she raises her silver shield, her soft searching rays penetrating even the dark depths of the kloofs, casting weird shadows around, and flooding the intervening ridges, all clothed in waving yellow grass, with an unearthly supernatural light. Very soon I can make out every twig, leaf, and grass-blade in the run in front of me; not the smallest brown "dassie" gets past unperceived, whilst I remain silent and unseen in my dark hiding-place.

Perhaps I had been thus watching for two hours, surrounded by the rustling trees and the busy voices of the night, alone with my little world of revellers. But the game I watched for came not. Is it possible they have in any way ascertained that of which I am at present in blissful ignorance? For I am not the only one who has marked the course they have taken every night and morning; a stealthier sportsman than I, one utterly cruel and relentless, keen and tireless, has resolved to try for pork to-night! Keeping in the shade of the next kloof, he creeps silently but swiftly towards my hiding-place, taking advantage of every patch of bush and piece of broken ground with the skill of a born stalker. Suddenly, as I stand with my eyes fixed upon the run in front of me, a dark shadow is thrown across the bush, something above me has passed along in the moon-rays, passed just beyond, and then stopped, as the now motionless shadow tells me. For no sound betrays him, not even as I step back a pace with greatest caution, so that I can see over the krantz wall, 6 or 8 feet above me. There stands my rival, the night-prowler, motionless, a dark object, with just a silver stripe along its back, and throwing a darker shadow on the moonlit ground, evidently aware of my presence—for he looked hard at me, and his eyes gleamed again—though possibly he was puzzled to account for it. Steadily I raise my trusty rifle, the sights showing grandly in the clear moonlight, till the dark shoulder of the object on the krantz above is covered; a flash, an echoing report, and above all the sounds of commotion around me—the scampering of vermin and fluttering of birds—I could hear the deep "woof" of the stricken leopard, and knew that in all probability I should have

something better to show for my night's watching than a pair of pig-tusks. No further sound came from the krantz above, though several minutes elapsed before the surrounding kloofs settled down to the ordinary quiet hum of night. As I had no wish to run on top of a wounded leopard at night, I waited at my post for ten minutes or so, then walked up the kloof, and climbed out at the far end, quietly stealing back along the edge to the top of the krantz, with cocked rifle, and finger on trigger. A patch or two of low scrub lay before me, and beyond that comparatively open ground, with just a few stray burnt and brittle twigs of *taaribosch* and wormwood scattered here and there. Yet something else was there as well, grim and gaunt in the moonlight: on almost the very spot upon which, full of strength and restless activity, he had stood a few moments before, lay the leopard, like to a creature fashioned in silver, so white did the carcass gleam in the moon's rays. No need even to throw a stone towards him, for I knew he was dead—had dropped dead in his tracks almost, for he had barely moved half-a-dozen paces. He seemed to have fallen over, and kicked himself along a yard or two by his hind-legs, and then died. The hollow bullet had caught him on the elbow-joint, driving large pieces of bone through his vitals, the butt passing up into the neck at the junction of the shoulders. After securing my pipe and tobacco, I laid my coat on him, and then smoked my way home, a distance of about a mile, in very good humour, even with bush-pigs, and quite content to allow my porcine friends a respite for the night. In the morning the boys carried the leopard home, and skinned him after I had measured and weighed him. He gave a total length of 6 feet 8 inches—sportsman's measurement—tail 2 feet 10 inches, girth of forearm $11\frac{1}{2}$ inches, weight 172 lb. He was in excellent condition, both inside and out.

It must not be supposed that success always, or even frequently, attends the sportsman's efforts to bring this most cunning animal to bag, no matter how keen he may be; and more especially where they are numerous, and one is constantly hunting them up, failures are inevitable, and far outnumber successes. And, after all, what would shooting be worth without such failures? One would not give a straw to be always certain of everything—certain of every shot being a hit, or of always find-

ing game when and where one wants it. It is the glorious element of uncertainty in all things connected with our sublunary sphere that makes life worth living. We know what the certainties are, and they should suffice. No: failures are the sauce of the whole business, and give "zest and piquancy" to that which would otherwise very soon pall on the taste; and success therefore, when it comes, is doubly pleasant.

As confirming my belief that leopards are far more likely to be met with unexpectedly than when hunted up, I will relate an incident which occurred on October 17, 1891, and which was a decidedly unique piece of good fortune. I was outspanned at the time with my waggon close to the head kraal of an important 'Msutu headman living away some thirty-five miles from my place, under the shadow of the Drakensberg plateau, and close to the Oliphants river. Good as is the country around my house for leopards, these hills, in which rise the many tributaries of the Mtiklowi and the Mxlasiti rivers, far surpass it. The mountain-sides are covered with miles of dense dark forest, containing a large quantity of big and useful timber. The kloofs intersecting these forests, and down whose boulder-strewn bottoms run the numerous tributary feeders of the above-mentioned rivers, are in many cases quite inaccessible to human beings, and are the chosen haunts of leopards, bush-pig, and bushbuck. A few buffalo still linger there, and in the deepest, darkest, most silent recesses, into which no ray of the sun ever enters, the beautiful Samango monkey makes its home. They never leave these forests, and I have never seen them in another part of this district; consequently they are most difficult to obtain, and their skins fetch a high price amongst the natives. Hill leopards, though they are not such Ishmaelites as lions, wander a great deal over a limited tract of country, and often descend from their mountain-fastnesses to the grass-covered plains below, perhaps for a change of diet or on some love enterprise bent. Thus, when tiring of bushbuck and bush-pig, they wander abroad in search of sheep, goats, and calves—of which the wealthy natives in that district have a large supply—and of reedbuck, duiker, and steinbuck on the plains.

It was with a pair of these wanderers that I had the good fortune to try conclusions on the occasion referred to. I was

down in the district collecting the yearly rents from the natives upon the unoccupied farms, and on the day in question had a crowd of about a hundred boys camped near my waggon. Whilst I was standing talking to one of the headmen, about 80 yards from the waggon, a shot was fired at the back of the ridge behind the camp, and next moment two reedbuck, ram and ewe, ran over, and stood for a moment on seeing the waggon and the crowd of Kafirs. Meat was a consideration with scores of hungry mouths to fill, so I ran for my rifle, and as the bucks, whistling shrilly, jumped away, I fired at the ram, running broadside about 120 yards distant. The "clap" of the bullet was loud and plain, the ram staggered an instant, then went off at top speed with all my dogs, and forty or more eager boys in pursuit. A second shot was of course impossible under such circumstances, unless I had wished to bag a Kafir; so taking a couple of cartridges in my hand, I ran on after them, accompanied by one of my Swazi police. We expected the dogs would have pulled the buck down close at hand, but it had got away down to the river, where it was eventually killed. I did not see the force of going all the way down after the crowd, so told my boys to run on, and if the buck was caught to instruct the Kafirs to bring it up to the camp. Standing under the shade of a thorn-tree—for it was a scorching day—some moving object upon the opposite ridge caught my eye, and I made it out to be a large reedbuck ram: it had apparently heard the barking and shouting as the chase passed by, and jumped from its "seat." When I saw it, it was hopping lazily along—probably not at all pleased at being thus forced to exert itself in the hot sun—and evidently intending to lie down as soon as a handy patch of cover offered good shelter. When it disappeared from view in a gully and did not come out on the other side, I concluded it had found such a suitable spot, and I half thought of going back to camp and saddling-up my horse. It would only waste time, however, and thinking I ought to get him with one of the two cartridges I had taken from the waggon, I walked over to the gully, which upon a closer inspection proved to be but a slight hollow or depression in the ground, scarcely to be termed a gully, and 50 yards across from ridge to ridge. The grass was very long everywhere, and some thick cover in the centre of the hollow looked a likely spot

to have been selected; but I decided first to try a thorny tangled patch some 20 yards up the gully to my left. Directly I approached the edge of it, the ram jumped up; but before I could get a shot, he whisked round behind a thick dark bush, which hid him from sight. As he ran out on the other side, however, I gave him a shot broadside, and hit him hard just as he topped the low ridge. He disappeared at once, and I thought was down, but failed to see him when I ran over to the spot. As I had now put the last cartridge in my rifle, I determined to try and make a good shot if another proved necessary. The kloof in front of me, into which he had run, proved to be very deep and extensive, covered with thick bush, and with great rough boulders cropping up everywhere amongst the tangled grass and creepers. In this gully I felt sure the buck lay, as I was up in time on the ridge to have seen him had he gone out; so after looking round a little, unsuccessfully, I returned to the ridge to take up the blood-spoor, which I knew would be visible. Suddenly I heard the cry of a buck and a peculiar choking sound behind me, near the bottom of the kloof, and running in that direction, saw a leg kicked up spasmodically above the cover a little to my right front. "Confound those dogs, they'll spoil the head!" was my first thought; but how they could have reached the spot so soon after the shot I could not imagine. I was on the point of yelling at them, when I heard a very different sound proceeding from the spot—a low purring growl—and next moment, with ready rifle, I came on to where lay a fine leopard, with his back towards me, his cruel fangs buried in the throat of the reedbuck, and his claws tearing at the fore-shoulder. Not 15 yards separated us. He must have heard me—indeed he discontinued tearing at the buck's throat and shook his head about, as a dog does when he gets a feather in his mouth—yet so taken up was he with his prize that he did not even honour me with a look. I was not long in deciding how to act; but as I raised my rifle, I saw across the gully, some 40 yards away, another fine leopard crawling down the side of a large ant-heap under a widespreading '*mfoffi*'-bush. There was no help for it; it was my last cartridge, and I fired at once at the nearest, aiming at the back of the head between the ears. He never moved,—the bullet smashed the back of the head and lower jaw to pieces. I

saw the other leopard spring off at the shot into the long grass, but almost immediately lost sight of her, and, with an empty rifle, I did not stop long to look, but hurried up the ridge towards the camp. I intended to shout for more cartridges when I was a little farther away, but to my delight I saw my boy coming running up with three of the dogs, and I was doubly gratified when, upon my telling him the news, he said, "I have two cartridges for you; I took them in my hand when we ran off from the waggon." His forethought secured me my further success undoubtedly, and it was most lucky his turning up. He said he heard my shot, and thought he would come over and see what it was I was firing at. We returned together to the spot, and ere long Slim, Start, and Sabi were barking like demons down in the gully. We were not sure whether they had the leopardess at bay or had only run on to the dead one; but we hurried down and, right enough, found them at the latter, and for the life of me I could not get them away.

We could not see anything of the leopardess, and as I felt sure she must have stolen away, the best plan seemed to be to go over at once with the dogs and take up the spoor. I took my waist-belt off, and was tying it round Start's neck to lead her away, when Muntumuni, who had gone a few paces lower down the side of the gully, called my attention. "'St, baas!" No need to ask what he saw. Creeping up to him as he eagerly beckoned to me, I looked across the gully in the direction he was silently pointing, but though I scanned every scrap of cover and bush, I saw nothing. "Nansiya, 'sihlahleni, pezu ku le 'litsh 'elimhlopi!" ("There it is, in the tree, above that white stone!") he whispered; and I saw her at once. She was crouching on the lower branch of an old dead tree growing out of a cleft in some rocks, but partially hidden by some straggling bush. I quietly moved a little to one side, and when about 30 yards from her, and just as I brought my rifle up, the dogs started barking, and I heard her give a low growl. But I fired at that moment; the bullet entered her head at the side between the nose and eye, and passed out half-way down the neck on the opposite side; she reared up, clawed savagely at the branches, and fell down into the bush below, dead. The boys whom we called to "come over and take this reedbuck" did not delay, and the astonishment

depicted upon their faces when they saw two dead leopards lying by the reedbuck—we had dragged the leopardess across the gully to where the other lay—can well be imagined. Amidst uproarious shouting we carried our trophies campwards, a distance of about half a mile, thoroughly well pleased with our success, much of which was due, first to the thoughtfulness of my boy, and then to his keen eyesight afterwards in spotting the leopardess across the gully.

Two reedbuck rams and two leopards in as many shots is not a bad day's work, and worth going a long way to secure. The one reedbuck carried a fine head, the horns being very thick and $14\frac{1}{2}$ inches in length. The leopards were probably mother and cub, though the latter was full grown, in fact exceeded the other in length, but its limbs were light. It was a male, and measured 6 feet 5 inches; the leopardess gave 6 feet $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches, but her girth of forearm was $10\frac{1}{4}$ inches as against $9\frac{1}{2}$ inches; her height 2 feet 4 inches, that of the cub 2 feet $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches. The skins were light in colour, and the hair very long. The leopardess had three cubs inside her, which would have been born probably in December.

Upon another occasion I had an opportunity of closely inspecting the open jaws of a leopard, and the furniture inside, and it struck me at the time what a capacious maw it was for so comparatively small an animal. The skulls of all the *Felidæ* are very disappointing when cleaned, being altogether disproportionate to the size of the head before skinning; nevertheless, the actual gape both of lion and leopard is very great. In this case, fortunately, the view was enhanced by the fact that some few—even if only a very few—paces separated us; probably a closer inspection would have interested me less. It happened thus-wise. Early one morning I set out for a neighbouring kraal, in the vicinity of which a hunt had been arranged by the headmen, and at which I, as in duty bound, was to be present. Most of the young bloods were still hanging about, getting a mouthful to eat before starting, when I left with two Swazi attendants, one of whom, Nogwaja (the Hare)—a good-hearted kindly fellow, and brave as a lion, who had seen much war service in the 'Dhlavela regiment in Swaziland—is since dead, killed in the Low Country by a bite from the virulent fangs of the dreaded

black 'mamba. I had four dogs with me also. The footpath we took was an uncommonly rough one, even for a native path, leading us through gorge after gorge, out of one into another, and very suggestive of life upon this planet of ours, with its numerous ups and downs, and few levels. But the day was very young, and quite cool enough to make walking pleasant exercise. The grass was drenched with dew; fleecy mists like palls of carded wool overhung the low valleys; bushbuck stood warily on the edges of the thickest cover, waiting for a few warming rays from the genial sun; and the timid duiker, its bright silver-grey coat now dark and matted with the falling dew, still crept with dainty tread amongst the low scrub. The sun was about half an hour up when we passed through the largest ravine that crossed our path, and climbed the other side up the face of a steep krantz, then followed the track on its summit and along the edge till we reached a spot where the gorge narrowed to a width of about 180 yards. There we stood a few moments to rest, watching a troop of baboons in the rocks some distance up the kloof, and we remarked that those hairy caricatures of humanity were particularly noisy and demonstrative. Suddenly Nogwaja grasped my arm and in a hoarse whisper said, "Baas, baas, buka, nay' ingwe!" ("Sir, look, there's a leopard!") For full five minutes, I think, I was staring in the direction pointed out, but for the life of me could not pick him up, as he was under the krantz, where the level rays of the sun had not yet reached. As I was in the act of pulling out my glasses I caught sight of him, just walking out of a little dry gully, and crossing a large flat stone, perhaps 150 yards distant: he was heading diagonally down the face of the krantz, evidently making for the thick bush below. He had not seen us; but I had no time to lose, so, kneeling down, took a steady aim and fired. 'Gad! what a commotion followed the shot! The smoke hung round so thickly I could not see what effect my shot had, but I felt a thrill of pleasure when I heard the boy's shout, "Pansi—i pansi!" ("Down—he's down!"), and I could distinctly hear him above all the noise skirring and growling savagely down in the gorge. And there *was* a noise too: *hahdedahs* (glossy ibis) flew out from every nook and cranny, and circled overhead with harsh cries, their long necks stretched out in a manner suggestive of a desire to get ahead faster than

their heavy pinions permitted ; blue monkeys yelled and chattered as they darted through the cool green shades of the broad-leaved 'msenga-trees ; and from every coign of vantage on the



" The baboons . . . were particularly noisy and demonstrative."

krantz beyond, the revengeful cry of an old male baboon—many of whose progeny had doubtless fallen victims to the leopard's fangs and claws—echoed and re-echoed through the rocky gorge.

Three or four more boys who had followed closely behind us now came running up, as they too had heard the shot and the growling of the leopard. I suggested it would be well to go down into the kloof; but Nogwaja was of a different opinion, and said that if the other boys and dogs went in on the spoor, the leopard, if able to get away at all, would assuredly make for the gap in the krantz a few yards above where we stood, in order to get away into an extensive bush which lay behind us, as the kraals upon the opposite ridge would deter him from escaping in that direction. So we sent the four boys off with some of my dogs, and in about twenty minutes saw them appear on the other side of the kloof and proceed to lay the dogs on to the spoor. Then the latter rushed off, followed by the boys, into the kloof; a brief pause, and then the dogs gave tongue, warily at first until the leopard stood at bay, when they made the kloof ring with their savage barking. I was annoyed then at not having gone down; but it was too late, we could only stand and listen. Again we could tell that the leopard was on the move, as the loud barking ceased; and yet again he stood at bay: my dogs being young and inexperienced, would not combine well to hold the brute fast. Three times the leopard thus broke bay, then suddenly the barking ceased, and we heard a clear shout from the boys below, "Iya kupuka, iya kuwe, iya kuwe, baas!" ("There, he's going up towards you, sir!")

Well done, Nogwaja, my boy! you're a true prophet after all! We had a good view all along the krantz, and though there was some thickish bush in the gap upon the edge of which we stood, there would be no difficulty in getting a shot at anything, whichever way it ran out. Just in front of where we stood was a low krantz about 14 feet above a wide ledge which overhung the bush. The face of the krantz was slippery and water-worn, and we could not get down it, otherwise the ledge below would have been a capital place to stand, as enabling us to see under and into the bush in the gap. An 'msumbi ran out just after the boys shouted, and caused me to bring my rifle up as it darted through the bush; next moment it ran out below us not 20 yards distant, and I found myself wishing that it was the leopard. A few minutes afterwards I walked a little nearer the edge to listen if I could hear anything in the gap, as we could not tell where the dogs or the

leopard had got to. I heard a slight rustle below, whether in the bush or on the ledge I could not tell, and there was no time to find out, for with a rush and a bound the leopard threw himself against the krantz, clutching at the grass-roots on top with the claws of one forepaw—the other was broken just above the wrist—and I could hear his hind-claws scraping on the rocks in his endeavours to scramble up. I knew that he was very close to me; his great blood-smeared jaws were within 6 feet, and I could see his wicked yellow eyes glaring savagely, and the saliva, red-tinged, dropping from the gleaming tusks. As Nogwaja ran in with uplifted assegai, I fired down into the brute's mouth, and with a savage gasp he fell down on to the ledge below. The plucky Swazi, without waiting to see if he was dead, jumped down on top of him, and gave him a final thrust with his assegai ere life had sped.

My first shot had broken his right forearm between the elbow and wrist, the ulna and radius being reduced to pulp. How he ever sprang up that rock is a mystery. The dogs were nowhere near, and he evidently thought he was escaping easily; probably he had been creeping along the ledge, and suddenly seeing me appear above and in front of him, made a spring at the krantz to try and escape behind me. I believe he would have clawed one of us if his forearm had not been broken, as he would have landed easily on top of the rock, between us. His broken forearm also accounted for his not going up a tree: they seem very chary of taking to the branches if any of their limbs are broken. He was a very large specimen for a hill leopard, measuring 6 feet 11 inches; but in low condition, which is unusual, though I have never seen them so inordinately fat as some leopards in the Low Country.

I well remember an occasion upon which a pair of leopards had paid an unannounced visit to old 'Mgiyo's kraal during the night and killed two goats, besides severely mauling a two-year-old bull, which however recovered. I was staying at the old location at the time, and joined the party in pursuit of them next day. We found the one goat uneaten in some long grass just on the edge of a deep thorny kloof into which the spoor led. We had about thirty boys in the party, several of whom posted themselves in various spots up and down the kloof, while the remainder

with the dogs went in on the spoor. I felt certain that if the leopards were in the kloof they would endeavour to escape by the lower end when disturbed, as by so doing they could easily and quickly reach a more extensive kloof farther down towards the river. We had been so quick in following them up, that there seemed a good chance of our finding them in this kloof, especially as there was good cover and water in it. I took up my station in a narrow game-track, about 60 yards from the bottom of the kloof, and on the opposite side to that by which the leopards had entered. Two young fellows sat on the bank about 100 yards higher up the kloof, on the side from which we had followed the spoor in.

About half an hour afterwards the dogs gave tongue, in a half-hearted sort of manner. They were evidently "funking" it; silence for five minutes, then a loud chorus of barking: three shots in quick succession, a fourth and a fifth, each sounding farther away up the kloof. Then silence again. Hang it all! what does it mean? They certainly have not killed, for there is no mistaking it when they do. Surely not an accident! I was strongly tempted to leave my post and go and see for myself, when the dogs recommenced barking, and I distinctly heard the snapping of a gun-cap. Then one of the boys in the kloof above called out—evidently to his companion—"That's it, that's the leopard, I saw his colours plainly!" Not dreaming that the boys would let the leopard pass them without firing a shot, as both had guns, and that the brute was then not 80 yards from, and coming towards, me, I concluded that it had gone up a tree, and they were thus undecided as to whether some object they saw amongst the branches was actually the leopard or not. So I started off towards them, and even then, had I kept to the kloof, I would have met the leopard face to face, and could have shaken hands with him had I so desired; but my star was not in the ascendant that day, because, thinking to get up to the spot more quickly, I scrambled out of the kloof and ran along the bank, thus actually running away from the leopard. What a muddle-headed fool I was! I had not covered 50 yards, when below me, in the kloof, "Sah! sah! sah! yi lume-bo!" then a hollow report, a stifled savage roar, and first blood was drawn. Then in rushed the dogs, and there *was* a row for about two min-

utes. I ran down, hoping to come in at the death anyway, and saw the dogs grouped together round the foot of an old gnarled *'mnombela*-tree, barking excitedly and jumping up at the trunk of the tree, between two forked boughs of which, at about 18 feet from the ground, crouched the leopard, blood dropping fast from him. The two boys were on the spot, and the one whose gun had missed fire in the first instance, again had a similar misfortune as I arrived on the scene. I raised my rifle to put an end to the poor brute—who, however, still snarled and growled very viciously—but before I could fire, down he came “thud” on to the ground. The dogs were upon him in an instant, and the two plucky young fellows ran in with their assegais. The leopard, however, fighting like a mad thing, and clawing right and left, seized one assegai in its jaw and broke it short off, then regaining his feet and cuffing right and left, very soon cleared a wide space in front of him, of which I took advantage to give him a bullet through the head.

To my surprise, upon examining him I found that the shot fired by the boy had entered the belly and broken the hind-leg, so the poor brute was fearfully crippled; but as it proved that the leopard was in the tree when he got the bullet, I was curious to know what had happened. The boys then told me that after all the firing at the leopardess—which got clear away—at the upper end of the kloof, they saw the leopard stealing down towards them on their side of the bush. One of them being several yards higher up the bank than his companion, attempted to fire, but not until the animal was abreast of him, or even a little past him, and nearer to the other boy. The cap snapped, and the leopard instantly stood, then moved on again, and stood at a spot not more than 50 yards from where I was stationed, and from which, had I but waited there a few minutes longer, I should have had an easy shot. As the one boy stood peering irresolutely into the bush, as if uncertain whether he saw the leopard or not, his companion called to him, “That’s it,—that’s the leopard!” Then it was that the latter, hearing the voices, the sound of the dogs coming along on his spoor, and my movement ahead of him, ran for the tree and sprang up. The dogs rushed up on the hot scent, and the boy who had not yet attempted to fire—but who had lost a good opportunity when the leopard stood in the bush

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—shot at it in the tree just as I came upon the scene. Anyway the young fellows had done well, and fairly earned the hide, for which the chief gave them a heifer.

The leopard was a full-grown male, in the usual good condition, about $6\frac{1}{2}$ feet in length. I had no means of measuring it accurately at the time, but the pegged-out skin measured 6 feet 11 inches.

The old hound Mahlatshwa, of which I have spoken before, was there that day, and was the worst clawed of all the dogs though every one of them had amply received sufficient where-with to remember that leopard.

It is a wonder that more dogs do not get killed in that way, but when a leopard is so badgered by a crowd of them he only inflicts superficial wounds: when he stands fairly at bay with the dogs in front of him, he tells a different tale; and I have seen one spring out from under a rock where he was bayed, and back again as quick as lightning, but leaving four *dead* dogs behind him, and two others maimed for life!

CHAPTER XII.

HUNTING THE HILL LEOPARD (*continued*).

Melanism amongst African leopards—Seen by Mr Stanley—Barefaced robbery—Marked down—How to prevent breaking back—Hesitation—A bad shot—A magnificent trophy—An unnatural mother—The exception, not the rule—A doubtful “clop”—An unprovoked attack—Retreats with her cubs—Follow the spoor—At fault—Place a bait—Contentment—A silent kloof — “Baas, run, here’s a leopard !”—Close quarters—A cub killed—A hideous sight—Death of the leopardess—Great vitality—A favourite haunt—An *’mtakati*—A reputation to maintain—Discovery of the cubs—Spring-guns—Reasoning power of the Felidæ—Bush pigs—A good shot—Unsuccessful search—Pillar-rocks—Vigilance relaxed—Under surveillance—Kafir dogs—May mistaken—Plan of the hunt—Having a lively time of it—“*Iya kupuka*”—Excitement—A lost chance—Two leopards instead of one—“All right, let him go !”—Now for it !—A thorny bush—At bay—A tug-of-war—Good news—Too risky—“Pas op !”—Reckless firing—The last charge—Turning a somersault—A devoted mother—The leopard’s larder.

I AM not aware of any instance of *bond-fide* melanism having been recorded as occurring amongst the leopards of any part of Africa, though there appears to be no reason whatever why such should not exist in some of the dense forest tracts in which leopards are frequently found. Judging by accounts I have read of the Asiatic animal, I should expect them to be of a most retiring disposition, and consequently rarely met with ; but nevertheless believe that during the years which I have spent in districts where the bush or kloof leopards abound, I would certainly either have seen or heard of such if any were in the neighbourhood. In his last work, ‘*In Darkest Africa*’ (vol. ii. p. 318), Mr Stanley writes : “On returning to Kative I saw a great black leopard

about 250 yards off, just retreating from the lake side, where he had been slaking his thirst." It would be most interesting to know whether the animal referred to was a genuine black leopard or merely an unusually dark-coloured specimen of the ordinary leopard. In the absence of further evidence respecting their occurrence, I incline to the latter opinion, knowing from personal experience that these unusually dark-skinned animals appear in certain lights to be quite black, even at a distance of 100 yards, to say nothing of 250. If the genuine black leopard—that is, the melanoid of the ordinary *Felis pardus*—existed in any districts inhabited by natives, some such skins would undoubtedly be found in their possession, as they would certainly be valued very highly, and in that case the matter would at once be set at rest. I have now in my possession the skin of a leopard which I shot on the 28th November 1888, under somewhat fortunate circumstances; and though the animal was not a large one—dimensions given elsewhere—it was full-grown, and certainly the most beautiful specimen that I have ever seen. At a distance of only 50 yards he appeared quite black, and I thought I had indeed secured a valuable trophy.

About the time when this piece of good luck befell me I scarcely ever had my rifle out of my hands, being kept constantly on the move from one place to another by the repeated attacks, upon the various kraals, of wild-dogs, hyænas, and leopards; and though I had been revenged upon the two former, the leopards had hitherto saved their hides. There appeared to be two couples of them, and one—the female of which was probably the brute that ten days later gave me such an ugly mauling—had for a long time been prowling about a neighbouring kraal, exacting tribute in the most barefaced manner, in the shape of a goat or a dog, about every three days. All attempts to destroy them had failed, and though the boys, contrary to my distinct orders, had set those devil's machines—spring-guns—for them, the leopards knew too much, and with a wink of the eye passed by on the other side when they saw the suspicious-looking bait fixed so nicely on the fatal gun-muzzle, although a few days later one of the other pair yielded to the seduction and lost his life. I tried several nights watching for them without success, but about 6 A.M. on the morning following my last "night out," I

was returning homewards, and had reached a spot about three-quarters of a mile from the kraal near to which I had been watching, when I met two Kafirs coming quickly along the foot-path, and I could see that they had some important information to communicate. They informed me that they had just seen a "black" leopard enter a patch of bush close by, from which it had not emerged, and as they knew well that I was sitting out that night, were on their way to tell me about it when I met them. I sent one of them back to the kraal to call a few boys up, and told the other to hurry home and get my boys from the house, with the dogs and some more cartridges. When the boys turned up, I made them put the dogs into the small isolated patch of bush in which the leopard had taken cover, with a view to driving him down towards the spot where I posted myself, between the bush and the nearest large kloof, for which the leopard would be almost certain to make a bolt when started. This appeared to be the best plan, for had the boys entered from below and tried to drive him *up* to me, he would certainly have been suspicious, and in all probability have attempted to break back, and mauled some of them. It is sometimes a very hard matter to get certain animals to go forward before a shouting crowd of beaters, or even before a fire. Intuitively they seem to suspect danger ahead, and constantly break back. The only plans one can then adopt are either to take up one's stand behind the beaters, at the end of the kloof or cover at which they have entered, or else to drive quietly with as little noise as possible, so as to surprise them, when they may perhaps run in the opposite direction to that from which the cause of alarm first appeared. I have known old reedbuck rams that will never run before a fire, preferring to face the fiercest flames rather than do so: such plucky brutes deserve to escape.

There was some hesitation at first amongst the few Kafirs that I had,—

"All shrank like boys, who unaware,
Ranging the woods to start a hare,
Come to the mouth of the dark lair,
Where, growling low, a fierce old bear
Lies amidst bones and blood."

But as soon as the dogs were fairly started, there were not want-

ing those "who would be foremost." It seemed they had scarcely entered the bush when there was a sudden barking of dogs, a shot fired, and general commotion. Silently I awaited the rush of the leopard towards my position, but to my astonishment he dashed out on the left, uttering quick hoarse grunts, and with the dogs close on his heels. He looked a very small animal, but his wonderful colour attracted me more particularly. A few long bounds up the face of the ridge, and he was amongst the boulders on the top, 60 yards from me. I could not get a shot as he dashed through the long grass, for I only caught glimpses here and there of his dark body; but on reaching the rocks he sprang up on to a large flat-topped boulder, where he stood skirring and snarling viciously, and threatening the dogs right and left. Even then I could not see him clearly through the thick waving grass-tops, but I took the shot, and missed him. With the second I broke his fore-shoulder, and down he rolled off the rock in amongst the dogs. The boys coming up, we ran to the spot together, where, to judge by the sounds issuing from amongst the rocks, the dogs were having a lively time of it. I soon saw the leopard in a large gap between two rocks, half hidden in bushes and low scrub, still successfully keeping the dogs off, as only Rover, Slim, and Bushman were baying in front; the others were—looking round for me! I crept to within 20 yards of the leopard, and watching my chance, when he turned half round to look at me, dropped him with a neck-shot. On entering the bush, the boys said, he had jumped up at once from a small hollow in the middle, and one of them had fired at him, and—perhaps fortunately for himself and others—missed him, when he broke cover at once.

He was, indeed, a beautiful beast,—small, but magnificently proportioned, and with wonderful muscles. I felt I could not sufficiently admire him. He measured as he lay, from nose to tail-tip 5 feet 8 inches, tail 2 feet 4 inches, height at shoulder 2 feet 3 inches, girth of forearm 10 inches. The ground-colour of the skin is dark vandyke-brown, with an orange shade of surprising richness and gloss, paling slightly on the flanks; chest and under-parts pure white, with long hair. Upon the head and lower parts of the limbs the spots—which are very close set all over the body—are deep black in colour, on the flanks rich sepia-

brown; and along the dorsal line the rosettes run into one another, forming four broad black bands, running from the neck to half-way along the tail. The ears at the back are quite black, without the buff tips as in other leopards. It can be at once understood from this description that at a little distance the animal could easily be mistaken for one entirely black.

There is no doubt but that at times the leopardess is sadly wanting in care of, and solicitude for, her cubs, though I think such cases are exceptional. An incident, however, came to my notice the other day which places the leopardess in a very equivocal light. A goat being missed from a kraal, the boys searched for it, and found it half eaten. They then set a spring-gun at the carcass, which was pulled off during the night. In the morning they went to examine the spot, and found a young leopard, about twelve months old, dead before the muzzle, but with its hind-quarters eaten. A careful survey of the spoor led to the discovery of the fact that it was the leopardess that had been guilty of this unnatural act. The boys assured me there could be no doubt about the matter, for although they failed to kill the brute, they had been aware that a leopardess and cub had been about the place for some time, so there was no reason whatever to doubt but that she had been the guilty party. I can, however, bear witness that they are usually most jealous of their cubs' safety, and will display the utmost courage and daring in their defence. Two such incidents I will relate, and I think they will go far to prove that at any rate there are brave and devoted mothers even amongst these too often maligned animals.

Late on the evening of February 14, 1888, I was out with my rifle searching for a buck for the larder. It had rained heavily throughout the day till about 4 P.M., when it held up slightly, and I took advantage of the opportunity to go out. I got a long shot at a duiker, which I missed, and seeing him run over into a gully which I knew contained only a few patches of scrub—the bush below being very dense, and of such a nature that a duiker would be unlikely to enter it—I ran forward as quickly as I could, hoping to catch sight of him standing in the gully, or at any rate to turn him out of one of the patches. The spur leading down to the gully was covered with long grass, which, like everything else, was so thoroughly saturated with the heavy

rain that walking through it was hard and unpleasant work. Seeing nothing of the duiker, I got down into the gully, and proceeded to beat the patches through from end to end; but as nothing got out, I walked up the spur again, intending to go down to the far end, where it entered the dense bush, in the hope of turning out a bushbuck or 'msumbi.

A small mound of earth, with a quantity of small stones on top, seemed to me a likely place from which to obtain a good view of the surrounding bush-covered spurs, and I had been there but a few moments when I noticed some object moving slowly and with caution through the long grass—which here grew fully $5\frac{1}{2}$ feet high—slightly below my position, and crossing the spur from left to right. Cocking my rifle, I stood on tiptoe to try and get a glimpse of the creature's body, but it was still quite hidden, though not 30 yards distant.

The cover was so long and dense that I could not possibly have got a shot by walking directly towards it, as the animal would disappear before I could even get my rifle up. So, as it was getting very late, and there was no time to waste, I moved quietly off, and hurried round to the head of the gully, crossed the upper arm of the big bush, and ran down the opposite spur to a spot about 150 yards distant from, though considerably higher than, the mound of earth upon which I had stood.

It was almost opposite to me. A wide strip of thick bush lay between us, and I had the advantage of what light there was, being to the west of the spur, with the evening glare behind. It was not long before I made out some creature moving slowly about in the long grass. I could see it with tolerable clearness, now that I was so far above it, and it appeared to be feeding along quietly in about the same direction as before. Soon afterwards it crossed a small open space, where the cover was less thick, and I saw at once that it was a bushbuck ewe. Sitting down, I took aim very carefully at such portion of the animal as I could see plainly, and fired. The buck appeared to drop to the shot, but it was hard to say, as the bullet "clopped" in a manner that all sportsmen know, and which does not always mean flesh—a bullet fired into wet earth makes a precisely similar sound on impact. However, I hurried round again to the spot, and commenced searching round for the buck or its spoor, as I felt

rather confident I had hit her. My search led me to a deep stony donga, one of many such, radiating from the outer edge of the large bush; and here I noticed the track of some animal through the grass, apparently quite fresh, but it did not appear to be that of a running buck. At last it became so dark in the bush that I thought it was no use searching farther; but I walked a few yards through the low thorn-scrub as far as the edge of the next donga, hoping that by chance I might even yet catch sight of the white belly of the dead ewe lying somewhere in the scrub. A movement in the donga a little below me attracted my attention, and brought my rifle up. I could see nothing, but suddenly, without any warning, with short angry grunts, a leopardess charged right towards me through the bush—at least I thought she was coming for me, instead of which she turned off and jumped down again into the donga, growling incessantly. It was impossible to get a shot at her, as she moved so quickly, and once in the gully, was completely lost to view. The light was so bad that I hardly liked to make any farther advance into the bush, but as the other side of the gully appeared more open, I ran round the top and scrambled down through the bush on the other side till I reached a broad open spot, and advanced cautiously across it to the edge of the donga, a little below where the leopardess had gone in. The growling had now ceased, but before I reached the bank I heard the cry of some leopard cubs down below in the bush. The leopardess, satisfied at having driven me off, had retreated with her little ones. Their presence sufficiently accounted for the demonstration made by the mother, and I was only surprised that she had not moved off long ago on hearing my shot. I now got down into the donga, and looked round to see if she had a kill, but could find nothing. Probably she had been in the other gully when I fired, and on hearing the shot had retreated with her cubs into this one.

It is no matter for surprise that the bushbuck should have been moving about so close to her,—I have noticed many similar instances, particularly with lions. I struck nearly a whole box of matches in searching for the spoor, but as I could do nothing more that night, had to return home empty-handed, and not a little disappointed. On the following morning I was early

astir, and went down to the bush with three boys. About half-way down the hollow in which I had searched for the duiker on the previous evening we found the bushbuck dead, though how it had crossed the open ground after getting the bullet without my seeing her is a mystery. We had to skin it off at once for fear of the meat turning, though I grudged the time wasted; and after hanging it up in the shade, we crossed over to the gully in which I had seen the leopardess. A careful examination of the spoor showed that of one full-grown animal and two or three cubs, and we at once followed it up. For a long distance she had kept along the bed of the creek, down towards the bush, the cubs running behind her, and it was very easy to hold the spoor until she had reached a spot where the bush was less dense on either side of the gully. Here she had left the creek, but the spoor was still plain enough, and we held it for fully two hours, with scarcely a delay anywhere. But this was too much good luck, and we were soon to have difficulty enough.

Judging by the course she had held so far, we thought she was probably making for the thick jungle under the hill, especially as she would be desirous of getting her cubs to a place of safety. At last the spoor crossed over into another gully, a terribly rough one, the same in which I afterwards shot the leopardess which charged me whilst in a tree, as related in the preceding chapter. Here we received the first serious check: she had got in amongst the rocks, and our most careful search failed to take the spoor out. Below us in the gully was a considerable waterfall—of no great height, but broad, and descending by a series of four or five rocky ledges into a great pool below. Round about this fall the bush was very close and thorny, and full of great boulders; and it seemed not at all unlikely that the animal we sought was in this gully,—might even be lying up amongst some of the masses of rock which were visible in all directions. And so our first real delay proved a lasting one. We had followed her across a small stream and up the bank on the other side, where she had entered a very dense thicket of thorny bush, and there we completely lost all trace of her. Close to the waterfall there was abundant evidence to show that a leopard had been there that morning; but whether it was the one we

had been spooring or not, we could not tell—at all events we found no cubs' spoor.

I could not make up my mind to watch the spot that night on such a poor chance, so I sent the boys away back at once to bring on half of the bushbuck, and while they were gone, stripped off my clothes and had a delightful bath in the cool silent pool below the falls. It was already late in the afternoon when the boys returned with the meat, so we at once hung it on a low stump, without tying it, and set out on our return home, taking the other half of the buck on with us as we passed the spot. I was up before dawn next morning, and proceeded directly to the spot where we had left the bait, accompanied by one boy, having instructed another who knew the spot to take some food down to the falls for us at mid-day. My companion was keen enough to go, after the first unpleasantness of turning out in the dark was overcome, but he did *not* much like the prospect of nothing to eat till mid-day, so he seized a lump of cold porridge out of the pot, and contentedly munched at it on the way. We found the meat untouched, and as we could see no fresh spoor anywhere about, I had more than half a mind to give up the search altogether; but we waited till the other boy joined us, and then held a council of war, whereat it was decided to let the meat remain for another night, and give the leopard yet another chance of being shot. We then went down to the pool and had a bath, as it was a terribly hot day, and afterwards clambering up the rocks on the other side, we found a spot on a large overhanging boulder, where, under an ancient many-limbed tree, whose hundred roots twined about the rocks like the arms of a giant octopus grasping its prey, we sat down to while away an hour or so doing nothing. Smoking and chatting quietly to one another, the time passed pleasantly enough, until at last I commenced to feel drowsy. The mid-day bath and the gloomy silence of the kloof compelled to this state of feeling, for there seemed to be absolutely nothing alive in that great bush save ourselves and a few droning insects; and yet now and again through the long vista of grey lichen-covered tree-stems came

“A slumbrous sound, a sound that brings
The feelings of a dream,
As of innumerable wings.”

Glancing upwards through the leafy screen, I could see here and there a great gold-and-purple butterfly

“Glance quick in the bright sun that moves along
The forest openings”—

a beautiful insect, and as rare as beautiful, for outside these deep kloofs you will never see him: on silent wings he flits from tree to tree, now appearing almost black as he passes swiftly through the gloomy shade; again dodging here and there, just where the merry sunlight dances through the sparsely-clothed *'mfomfi*-bushes; now glistening brightly, and anon waning to a tiny flickering point of light, to emerge again in the broad beams of the sun slanting between the lofty evergreen trees, and bathing its rich colours in the genial rays. Once I marked the straight flight of a crimson-winged touracou gliding through the arched boughs overhead, but the very presence of these rare visitants only made the silence and the gloom more impressive; and do what I would, I felt I must drop off to sleep sooner or later. I did not see the boy rise from his seat and cross along the rocks to where he had marked an *'mnombela*-tree well laden with the pleasant acid fruit; and how long he remained there eating I cannot say, but I suddenly started up and grasped my rifle as I heard him in an excited whisper calling to me, “Baas, baas, gijima, -nans' ingwe!” (“Sir, run, here's a leopard!”) It took me but a few seconds to get up to him, when he pointed with one hand down below the waterfall, himself all the while moving slightly forward, as if the animal he saw was passing round the krantz near the top of which we stood. I just caught a glimpse of it as it rounded a great boulder, but could not have told exactly what it was, but the boy had seen it very distinctly. I crawled up the rocks, and darted along the edge of the krantz, to a spot where a great rift had hurled down massive boulders of all shapes and sizes, which were heaped up pell-mell at its base. Here I swung myself down by some old projecting tree-roots on to the rocks below. For an instant I could see nothing; then two stiff-built little cubs of about four months old appeared, trotting along one after the other through some open bush. I could not see the leopardess, so I got lower down, almost level with the bush below, and as I did so, saw the two cubs stop for an instant, then

come running towards the foot of the krantz. They were not more than 40 yards distant. I knew the mother must be somewhere at hand, and contemplated moving a little farther along to try and see better over the rocks, when a little to my right I saw an object moving towards a small bush, head and shoulders appearing above the rocks, and next instant a fine leopardess sprang up on to the ledge, followed closely by the two cubs. I was ready for her, but in order to see more plainly, stepped down from the place where I had been standing into a narrow passage between two large rocks, from which I could see well under the bush. She at once saw me above her, and crouched low on the rock, staring hard at me under the bush. I was quite prepared for an attack directly I had caught sight of the cubs, but scarcely expected it would be so sudden. As my rifle came up I saw that she was in the act of charging, and fired rather hastily. She did not even stumble, but springing on to a sloping rock near to the edge of which I stood, would, I believe, have got hold of me next moment, but I gave her the other barrel in the chest, slipping quickly behind a large boulder on my left, after firing. I heard her growling loudly as she rolled down the sloping rock towards the bush, and it did not take me long then to get on to higher ground, whence I shouted to the boys to come and try to secure the cubs, of which I had completely lost sight, my attention having been fully taken up with other matters. Unfortunately the boy had been standing too high up on the rocks, and had not seen the cubs at all. But he came down when I called—the other one remaining at a respectful distance—and I instructed him to pitch some stones into the bush; but as the leopardess remained silent, we went cautiously down, and soon found that she had crept away amongst the rocks and entered the thick bush at the bottom. We immediately followed along on the blood-spoor, which was very plain, and a few yards farther on I caught sight of a spotted body lying in under a low shelf of rock on the edge of the bush. I saw it move slightly, and having no desire to experience another charge, I fired into it at once. Immediately afterwards we heard a low growl in the bush to our left front. Advancing to the spot where lay the creature I had just fired at, I was horribly disappointed to find one of the little cubs lying dead; the

12-bore bullet had torn it almost to pieces. I had made sure it was the leopardess as it moved under the shade of the rocks. This was most unfortunate, but was a pure accident. We now crept quietly towards the spot where we had heard the growling, and, just as we entered a little thin strip of bush, saw the leopardess lying stretched out on her side, with her head raised slightly against a little ant-heap. As she heard us she looked up quickly—a hideous sight, for her face and jaws were covered with frothy blood—her eyes gleaming again, and her lips drawn back into a savage snarl. Poor brute! she had made a plucky defence of her young ones, and it was with a feeling of pity for her fate that I gave her another shot between the neck and shoulder: her head dropped, her limbs quivered and stiffened, and she was dead. We searched everywhere for the other cub, or cubs, both that afternoon and on the following day, but without success. They were heard calling for about a week afterwards, but all rewards offered failed to bring about their capture. As they were sturdy-looking little chaps, they may have been able to forage for themselves,—at all events I hope so.

The leopardess was a very old one, and measured 6 feet 3 inches, tail 37 inches,—a very good specimen, though the skin, owing to the extremely long hair, was very indistinctly marked. My first bullet, when she was charging, had entered low on one side of the chest, breaking some ribs, and, passing through the stomach, went out on the other side. With the second barrel I also hit her in the chest, the bullet completely raking her, passing out high up in the hip, and yet it did not kill her on the spot as it should have done. The first was a solid bullet of soft lead $2\frac{1}{4}$ ounces; the second with small hollow and metal plug, same weight. I cannot understand how I could have pulled the rifle down so much at the first shot; it would have floored her on the spot if well directed.

The other incident to which I have referred in proof of a leopard mother's devotion to her cubs was a red-letter day in my sporting experience, as it resulted in the death of two fine specimens of these beautiful animals. Word was brought to me by May, one of the best and most reliable of my hunting Kafirs, that a leopardess with two cubs had taken up her residence

amongst some large rocks on the steep side of a kloof, distant about three miles from my house. This kloof was a very long one, and extended from the ridge above down to the flats, 400 feet below, with scarcely a break of any kind. As long as I can remember the place, it has been a very favourite haunt of leopards, as a number of Kafir kraals stood for a long time just on the other drop of the ridge, and about 500 yards from the head of the kloof. They were thus enabled to wage a war of extermination upon the unfortunate Kafirs' cattle, sheep, goats, and dogs—not that the community at large suffered much by the loss of the latter, but rather the reverse—and the kloof being so close, they ran but little danger. It was altogether too extensive for small gangs of Kafirs to attempt a surround. Round about its boulder-strewn and bushy kopjes I have myself shot nine leopards, and certainly from time to time have known of twenty or more in its vicinity.

For about three months, off and on, prior to the events I am about to relate, one particular leopard had been haunting the place. It would remain three or four days, seen perhaps to-day by a terrified herd-boy, to-morrow by a group of chattering women going early in the morning to a merry-making at a neighbour's kraal, and then a day or two later heard of at a kraal some ten miles distant, where it would remain till the excitement consequent upon its latest raid had blown over; but always returning, without fail, to its old kloof. Needless to remark, it did not waste its time in idle repose while away on these visits. On the contrary, it lived by its notoriety—with an occasional sheep or goat thrown in—and maintained its reputation wherever it went, at the expense of the luckless native upon whom it chose to billet itself.

When I first heard that there were cubs about, it struck me at once that this was very likely a leopardess which had been foraging thus extensively, and in places so far distant from each other, in order to avoid detection for the sake of her cubs. Nothing whatever transpired up to the day on which I shot her that could lead one to suppose that she had a partner in her evil-doings. There is no doubt, however, that she was the prime mover in all these escapades, as she was always described by those who saw her as a very dark-coloured animal—and such

the leopardess proved to be. May had an idea that he knew whereabouts the cubs could be found, and we instituted a strict search up and down the kloof, and especially about the spot he mentioned. But not a bit of it—she was far too cunning for that! Many later attempts resulted in failure; we could not even find fresh spoor. From time to time I placed tempting baits about in the shape of a bushbuck, duiker, or 'msumbi, going at dawn the next day to see if anything had touched them; but only once was the meat taken, and that time by a troop of wild-dogs, three of which I knocked over for their interference.

On another occasion three Kafir sheep were killed, one being dragged away and eaten. Now it was strictly against my orders for any boy to set a spring-gun for a leopard anywhere near my place. I told them always to bring me word of a kill, so that I could go and watch by it, or take such steps as seemed advisable to hunt the brute up. If I failed or did not feel inclined to go—which was very seldom—they could then set a dozen spring-guns if they were so minded, but I was always to be informed first. The owner of these sheep failed to tell me of his loss, but set his gun next evening. The leopard, however, was far too knowing to care about testing the boy's ability to set a gun, and let it severely alone. In the morning the boy removed the gun, and covered the bait over with thorns, intending to set the trap again that night. Going to the spot in the evening, he found that the leopard had been there in the meantime, and walked off with the bait! I am convinced that all the *Felidæ* are possessed of instinct far in excess of most other animals, almost amounting to reasoning power, and of which the leopard certainly has his share. Over and over again instances proving this have come under my own observation, and I have heard of many others from well-authenticated sources.

Next day the too-cunning brute had vanished, only to turn up again a week later. And, after all, her destruction was to be a matter of mere chance. On one occasion—perhaps the only one—she relaxed her usual vigilance, was seen, and lost her life in consequence; though in the end I think she atoned for all her misdeeds by her gallant defence of her young.

The day following that upon which she was last heard of, after her return (March 2d), I was out on horseback, looking for a

buck, and towards sunset was riding down a long spur, between which and the kloof that had taken up so much of my attention of late lay two or three low broken ridges. I had pulled up when half-way down the spur, and was watching some boys driving cattle up a distant slope, when I noticed certain dark objects moving slowly along amongst some low "sugar-bush" upon the spur which formed one side of the kloof in question. With the help of my field-glasses I made them out to be bush-pigs, although it was an unusually early hour for these animals to be on the move. I at once set out at a sharp canter for the ridge upon which I had seen them, and soon found their spoor, rode along it down the side of a little dry gully, and almost at once saw the pigs emerge from the kloof below, about 200 yards distant, and start climbing the opposite hill. I was off my horse, ran a few yards down the steep incline, and obtained a good shot at the pigs just as they were about entering a somewhat extensive patch of cover. I fired at the one that appeared to be the largest, and made sure I saw him drop, but did not stop long to look, as the others almost immediately dived into the nearest cover, but, jumping on my horse, raced round the head of the gully and down the opposite spur, coming right out on top of the troop. Immediately they saw me they ran like the mischief across my front, heading for a large bush which lay over the ridge. Jumping off, I fired at the last one, making a good shot, for he fell stone-dead. Two other shots fired at them as they ran along the top of the ridge missed. I now rode down to the spot where I expected to find the one first hit, but though I searched about till dark, I could not see anything of him. Disappointed though I felt, there was nothing for it but to go back, and after cutting the liver out of the one I had dropped on the ridge, and covering her up, I made tracks for home, which I reached at dark.

Next day I went with some boys to search, and after sending two of them back with the dead sow, we hunted in every likely and unlikely place for the other one, but failed to find it. On the following day, however, May came over to me about 2 P.M., and said he had seen a number of vultures sitting about on the trees in the big kloof, and others flying in that direction, so I walked over with him to the spot; but, as before, our search

failed, though I felt more confident than ever that the carcass was lying somewhere close at hand.

There was no sign of a drag, otherwise we would at once have concluded that the leopards had found it; anyway, it was not there. May then set out on his return to his kraal, whilst I seated myself upon a rock, and getting a pipe under way, amused myself, as I have done many a time before and since, by scanning the broken country around with my glasses. And as my eyes rested upon the distant ridge—where, clear cut against the evening sky, I could see May's tall muscular figure as he struck off on to the footpath at a quick walk—I noticed a few of the vultures were on the move, flying slowly round and round in widening circles over the kloof which lay 100 feet below me; and as I watched them I thought to myself, "Perhaps that is the leopardess come back to her kill."

Exactly opposite to me on the far side of the kloof—distant about 200 yards—a sharp jagged spur, consisting of rough quartz boulders, ran down towards the kloof, cutting it at right angles. Cropping out from this spur, and at a distance of perhaps 120 yards from the kloof, was a very peculiarly formed mass of rocks, pillar-like in shape, and from 20 to 25 feet in height; bare for the most part, but with small patches of scrubby bush growing here and there in the weather-worn clefts on their sides and summits. Behind this natural barrier the spur rose less steeply; and a number of marshy hollows, filled with long grass and thick patches of scrub and bracken, declared the existence of a spring—or "fountain," as it is here called—in the hillside. Large detached clumps of bush grew in abundance round about; and near the spur, just above the pillar-rocks, a small area had been burnt off, upon which the young bright green grass had sprung up, and which in its setting of brown and yellow appeared to glow with wonderful brilliancy as it caught the mellow rays of the evening sun. I watched this place attentively, as it seemed so tempting a spot for a duiker or 'msumbi to come out upon, seeking a supper of cool tender grass, or the ripe purple clusters of the *'mbukwana*.

Then again my eyes sought out the still circling vultures, and I set to wondering in which of all the many possible spots which I commanded from my look-out the long-sought leopard might be

lying; perhaps just awakening from its noonday siesta, and carefully cleaning its satin-like hide, the while watching the lengthening shadows in the kloof, which told of the approach of night. At last it became dusk; the vultures settled themselves for the night; in twenty minutes more, objects across the kloof would not be visible; the distant mountain-range became purple in the golden after-glow, and from May's kraal came the subdued sound of human voices, bleating goats, and lowing cattle,—and I prepared for a move. I put away my pipe and field-glasses, jumped down from the rock, and, throwing my rifle over my shoulder, was moving away, when—impelled as it were by some unseen attraction—I glanced once again towards the rocky spur. A great lump seemed to rise to my throat as I looked, for my gaze instantly fell upon a dark object moving up the spur, close under the outcropping reef, and distinctly visible as it passed over a wide stretch of bare bed-rock. I dragged my glasses out again at once, but there was little need for them, for I knew well what that lithe form was—knew that but little over 200 yards distant from me was the oft-hunted leopardess, the cunning '*mtakati*' that had so long evaded justice and challenged retribution. And how, even now, was I any nearer to compassing her destruction? There she was, in the flesh, but to-morrow where might she not be?

I had an excellent pair of glasses, and could make her out most distinctly. All the while I was turning over in my mind some plan by which to circumvent her. I at once recognised the fact that it was impossible to do anything that night. It would have taken me quite a quarter of an hour to get round the head of the kloof and down the other ridge to where she was, and by that time it would be too dark to see her, even supposing she remained in that spot, which was unlikely—indeed she moved slowly on as I watched her. I did not care to risk frightening her away by trying a shot from where I stood, as I could not hope to hit her in so bad a light; and to cross through the kloof and try to stalk her over such stony ground was equally out of the question.

Most reluctantly I had to admit that there was no feasible plan of attack that I could adopt that evening. I must wait till the following day, and then trust to chance to find her at home

in the kloof. I watched her closely as she climbed the spur, saw her jump on to a large boulder and look round her, then springing lightly to the ground, trot up towards the pillar-rocks, amongst which she vanished.

That night I sent round word to a few boys that they were to turn up promptly next day before sunrise; and, contrary to their usual custom, they did so. I swallowed a cup of coffee and a biscuit, and set out with four dogs led by the boys. A sharp walk of three-quarters of an hour brought us to the head of the kloof, where May and two other boys awaited us with three very miserable-looking dogs, which looked as if they had been living on a very limited supply of ground-nuts for many days. Poor brutes! they hunted well though, as they usually do—better than their masters deserve. As a rule, a native is most careless about his dog—it can live or starve as it likes; though certainly, through their own inherent laziness, they are often put to great straits themselves. But even when they get a buck, perhaps caught by the dog, the latter will see precious little of it. It is amusing to watch a group of Kafirs round a buck that one happens to shoot in their presence: their eyes actually water as they watch every scrap of the viscera and entrails, which one always cuts out and shares amongst the dogs! They look upon it as throwing pearls before swine. May suggested that I should stand at the upper end of the kloof, while the boys entered below and beat up; but though he seldom makes any mistake in such matters, I felt that he was wrong upon this occasion.

In beating a bush, always endeavour so to arrange that the driven animal shall be forced to go in the direction they would themselves prefer to take. It cannot always be done, of course; but the more nearly that a drive is conducted upon this plan, the greater the chances of success. Suspicious animals, inclined to break back, will be thrown more off their guard, and with very little hesitation will move on before the line of beaters, because they are going in the very direction in which they would choose to go; whereas such animals, forced in the opposite direction, would certainly break back upon the first opportunity.

In this case I took into consideration the large area that had to be commanded by one rifle, and the known cunning of the

animal we hoped to find; and it seemed more than probable that she would endeavour to slink away upon the very first indication of danger. There were two possible ways of escape that she might choose between—either by way of the kloof itself, following it down to the jungle below the hill, or by way of the rocky spur where I had seen her on the previous evening, which would enable her to gain another big kloof over the ridge. The first of these alternatives was the more difficult to guard against, as I could not command the breadth of the kloof with but one rifle. Believing, therefore, that she would not hesitate to move out quickly, and that three boys with dogs could rouse her as easily as thirteen or thirty, I proposed to place six boys—some of whom had guns—across the narrowest part of the kloof, abreast of the rocky spur; two others to be stationed, one on each side of the head of the kloof, and one at each of the two little side-gullies running into it. This left three to go in with the dogs, besides May, whom I took with me to hold Rover.

All the boys received instructions to take up their various stations, and to watch when I reached my post: then, as soon as I waved my hat, the beaters with the dogs were to advance, making as much noise as they pleased, and without regard to harmony; while the stops were to keep occasionally rapping the tree-stems, or to shout if they saw or heard the leopardess coming towards them. As my gang only numbered thirteen—one remaining with me—gaps several hundred yards in length were left in places, and had we been looking for anything but a leopard the plan could not have succeeded. But with this particular animal it was only necessary to guard such spots as she would be likely to attempt to break from, and these were fortunately very few. In fact, if the stops placed across the kloof only did their duty, there was but one course open to her—to creep away along and under cover of the rocky spur on which I stood. I carefully instructed my companion to hold tight on to Rover, who was not to be slipped till I ordered it, but promptly when I did. We saw numerous fresh signs of leopards, which had evidently been there lately, amongst the rocks, and having selected a good place in which to stand, commanding all approaches to the rocks from the kloof below and a considerable stretch of low cover on either hand, I jumped up on the nearest large

boulder and waved my hat. The boys did well—yells and shrieks as of the damned echoed through the kloof, and must have caused "Spots" to spring to her feet at once, feeling doubtful if, after all, her well-proved cunning would this day save her. Boldly but carefully the beaters advanced, and scarcely ten minutes passed before we heard the sharp quick barking of little Bushman down in the kloof, just in front of the boys: then the other dogs rushed in, and for the space of a few minutes they appeared to be having a lively time of it amongst themselves. From where we stood we could hear nothing of the leopard, but had no doubt as to what it was thus engaging the dogs. They came nearer and nearer the edge of the bush, standing every now and then and barking furiously in one spot, while the excited shouts of the boys urged them on. Then came a few moments' silence, broken by the loud clear notes of one of the stops on the other side of the kloof, "Nanso-ke, baas; nans' iya kupuka, 'mshiya lowa-ya!" ("There it is, sir; there it is climbing out over yonder, on the other side!")

The moment was an exciting one, and as I full-cocked my rifle—a little single Field-Metford—I glanced at May, whose eyes seemed starting from his perspiration-streaked face as he gripped old Rover by the collar with his great bony muscular fingers at a sign from me to hold him down. Then at last I heard a slight rustling in the grass below me and to my left, and the low scrub waved gently. Motioning to the boy to keep quiet, I crept forward amongst the stones towards a large flat rock, whence I thought to get a better view of the animal, which appeared to be coming up a slight hollow towards me. Two or three sharp barks in the scrub 50 yards lower down, from the dogs coming along on the spoor; then suddenly, out of the long grass, about 25 yards from me, a beautiful leopardess—a lithe, splendidly-marked beast—sprang up on a large sloping rock, carrying a cub in her mouth; but there was no time to get the sights on her before she jumped down again into the cover. I ran up through the stones, so as to get a shot at her as she crossed the ridge above, when again I heard the dogs barking—Rover joining in the chorus—this time behind me, on the other side of the ridge; and next moment, in a voice half-choked with excitement, May called to me, "Pangisa, baas, pangisa; nansiya ku se kudute!"



“She sprang on a large rock carrying a cub in her mouth.”

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("Be quick, sir, be quick; here it is, close by!") I did not stop to wonder if it was another leopard he saw, or, if the same one, how it could possibly have crossed over the comparatively open ridge so quickly, and unseen by me, but ran over at once to where May stood against a rock tugging with both hands at the now madly excited dog.

"Over in that bush where the dogs are barking," he spluttered out, nodding his head in the direction of a small patch somewhat higher and thicker than the surrounding cover, and about 50 yards distant.

"Ku lungile—yi yekela!" ("All right—let him go!") The collar slipped, the gallant old dog jumped off the rock and dived into the scrub. Hastily telling May to get the boys up, and to watch the cover where I had seen the other one, to prevent its escape, I followed Rover at once. I heard his deep bark, and a hoarse growl from the leopard as he sprang out, clearing the cover with great active bounds, and making for the ridge beyond which lay the other kloof. "Sah! sah! sah! hark to him, good dogs!" I shouted, to encourage them as they ran close on the leopard's tracks, when, having fired a snap-shot and missed, I laboured up the steep ridge after them. They disappeared over the top, and when I reached it, loud and clear came the baying from the next kloof, and the hoarse tremulous growling of the leopard. Now for it! Oh the excitement of such a moment! Panting and breathless, I run down into the bush; brambles tear across face and arms, from which blood trickles down; my knees are scored, and fluttering flags of shirt hang on the bushes behind. But who cares? Through or underneath all obstacles I force my way, till the growling of the leopard sounds quite close; again the kloof echoes to the wild fierce baying, and yet again I shout encouragement to the dogs, as, pushing my way through a bushy screen, I come in sight of the combatants. The leopard, a fine male, stands upon the edge of a little watercourse, amongst some large rocks, the dogs facing him, barking furiously, and advancing and retreating as the leopard aims swift blows at them with his paws. He is standing nearly broadside on to me, but hearing the voice, he glances behind him, then quickly springs up to the top of a high rock: the dogs rush in, my shot falls, and almost before he reaches the ground they are on him, tugging at cheeks

and foreshoulder, shaking him, flying back in momentary terror as the heavy muscular limbs twitch and quiver, then again seizing and shaking vigorously.

The leopard was dead, and I had time to draw breath, get a drink, and wash my face and head in the cool stream, while the panting dogs plunge into a deep pool below. Then we started back over the ridge towards the spot at which I had left May watching the thick scrub in which I had seen the leopardess. He told me that he believed she was still in the cover, unless she had succeeded in creeping back into the kloof. The other boys, however, had hurried up and endeavoured to surround the scrub in time to prevent her escape. This was good news and unexpected, for the leopardess certainly had every opportunity to escape when I left her to follow the leopard, and even now I feared that she *had* stolen away unseen by the boys. We tried to fire the grass round the edge of the cover, but it would not burn; and it then became a question how we were to dislodge her. I had no fancy for going in and running the chance of knocking her over in her charge, with only a single rifle—and charge I knew she would; neither did I care to send the boys in, though there would be a certain amount of safety in numbers. So I thought the best plan would be for all to go in with the dogs, and trust to the latter being able to prevent her escape. Leaving the dogs with May, I walked round the upper end of the cover till I reached a long, narrow, irregular gully that crossed the ridge and ran down into the cover where the leopardess was still supposed to be: it was about four feet deep, about the same in width, and full of long rank grass. From this spot I signalled to one of the boys to come round to me, in order that I could explain my intentions to him and give him the needful instructions. After I had told him what I required done, he started back towards the other boys, keeping well away from the cover all the time. I moved off slowly towards where May was standing, when suddenly came a loud “woof! woof!” from behind me. “Pas op!” (“Look out”—Dutch) I heard, and as I wheeled round, saw the leopardess charging out at the boy, who bolted like the mischief. I dare not fire for fear of hitting some of the boys across the gully,—the leopardess only charged a few yards out and then retreated into the donga. Just as she

jumped in I fired at her, and thought I hit her, as she growled loudly; but, as it turned out, I missed. The dogs rushed down, the boys cleverly closed round, while I ran to try and intercept her line of retreat to the cover below. As the boys closed in she again charged them, scattering them and the dogs right and left. For the second time I had no chance to fire, but some of the boys, less careful of injury to others, pulled off a couple of shots as she retreated into the donga. This was exciting certainly, but very annoying, as I felt sure there would be an accident if such indiscriminate firing was indulged in; and I yelled at the boys to keep steady and not to fire rashly. In the meantime the leopardess had retreated before the dogs towards the far end of the gully, where May was standing. Following her up, I saw her come out on the bank, where she stood growling and jerking her tail about. I would have got a shot then had not Rover and a plucky little Kafir dog rushed into her: she bowled them over instantly, and again retreated into the cover. Beckoning to May, however, to advance, I crept close up to the edge of the bank, and saw her at once, but indistinctly through the grass. She was only a few yards off, and I fired at once, dropping down out of sight as I reloaded; but she did not wait for another shot—like a flash of lightning she darted out of the other bank straight at May. He stood well: our two shots rang out together, and the leopardess fell dead, turning a complete somersault in the grass. The boy's bullet hit her right in the face, but only shattered the nose: being fired with a small charge of inferior powder, it had no penetration. So it was lucky that I hit her as well: the 360-grain hollow Metford bullet raked her from behind, tearing through her heart and lungs, the butt lodging in her throat—another score for a modified form of Express rifle!

Thus fell this notorious robber; but I can honestly say that I felt nothing but pity for her, and admiration of her pluck, and could have wished her alive again, if only to give us another such day's sport—a wish which would not be echoed by those who had so long supplied her with meat. For my part all her misdeeds were forgotten, for she was a plucky brute: twice she could have escaped, but she was evidently first anxious to place her cubs in safety, and afterwards loth to leave them. She scarcely deserved her fate, and if we could have found her cubs, I would

at least have seen their wants supplied as far as I could. Unfortunately, as is too often the case, we failed to do so. The skill and cunning which the mother displays in hiding them is marvellous. Being so small, I fear these died, as we never saw or heard of them again.

The leopardess was a most beautiful creature, with a glossy dark skin, short hair, and *open rosettes* along her back; 6 feet 5 inches in length, tail 31 inches,—thus being in many respects typical of the Low-Country leopards. The male measured 6 feet 10 inches, tail 34 inches; skin pale greyish yellow, with very irregular black markings on the back. Both animals were in the prime of life.

Yet one other circumstance remains to be recorded. On searching the spot from which the leopards had first got up, we discovered an old tree with claw-marks upon it 5 feet from the ground. Just above this was a large forked branch, and a deep hollow in the trunk where the limb ran out. I climbed up and found—the fore-quarters of my pig: there were also numerous hairs from the leopard's body, and every appearance of the cubs having been hidden there at some time. Is it possible that she was accustomed to leave them there whilst away upon her distant forays?

CHAPTER XIII.

HUNTING THE HILL LEOPARD (*continued*).

A beast missing—Bowled out—Punishment—Leopard or cheeta?—A threat—"Ngito!"—A flare-up—Relieved—Search for the leopard—An old wound—A warning—The danger of unreliable weapons—A clean sweep—Night-attack—Blood-feud—A lucky shot—Spotted hyæna shot—Bad management—Shot by a spring-gun—Who stole the dog?—Gets monotonous—A long drag—Disturbed—Arrange for a night-watch—Another warning—None too soon—An awkward position—On even terms—If only!—Miss-fires—She sprang forward—Over the bank together—A struggle for life—Blank!—Wrapped in rags—Doctors in consultation—My antagonist found dead—A search party—Retreat advisable—Saved by an assegai—So may it be!

ABOUT two years after these well-known marauders had paid the penalty, the Kafirs, who at that time had been living close to the head of the kloof haunted by these leopards, left the place and removed to another ridge. As usual, the site of the old kraal became a very favourite place for cattle to graze over, and for a week or more mine got into the habit of visiting it, going out in the morning shortly after sunrise in charge of a herd-boy, who would leave them to graze unattended and bring them back at sundown. One evening heavy rain was threatening, in fact it commenced slightly about 3 P.M., and I told the herd to hurry up and go for the cattle. On his return I missed one of the young oxen, and though the boy at first declared he had brought *all* back, he owned up eventually. He said that he went to the site of the old kraal, and found the cattle grazing together close to their accustomed spot. Of course, with the usual native acumen, he missed the young ox at once—especially as it was

a very peculiarly-marked beast—and set about looking round for it immediately, thinking it just possible some wild-dogs had collared it, or that it was lame and lying down in the long grass. Coming to a somewhat extensive patch of scrub, he stepped a few paces into it, and got a tremendous scare when, but a few yards from him, two leopards jumped up and rushed away growling into the scrub. He saw the dead beast at the same time, and naturally did not stop long to ask questions, but collected the other cattle together and drove them home. I should not have blamed him in any way had he at once come and reported the matter, as the beast was killed through no fault of his; but I rated him soundly for thus losing me a chance of bagging one or other of the leopards, and then telling lies into the bargain.

Suddenly an idea struck me, that as the beast was killed close to the kloof, and the wet weather was favourable for the leopards, they might possibly return to drag the carcass away at night—nay, might even then be enjoying their ill-gotten gains; and on purpose to lose no opportunity of keeping accounts square between us, I determined to go up at once with a blue-light, which by way of punishment I would make the herd-boy carry, and try and get a shot at them. The boy was somewhat of a fool, and could not tell me for certain whether the animals he had seen were leopards or cheetas; but when I laid some skins of each before him, he pointed without hesitation to those of the leopard. I put two blue-lights in my pocket, and gave the boy a bull's-eye lantern to carry to show us the path; and armed with a double 12 rifle, we struck out along the footpath at a quick walk, the night being dark and rain falling sharply at intervals. We were thoroughly wet through by the time we ascended the ridge at the farther end of which the ox had been killed, and I began to feel a little doubtful of success, especially when I saw the boy shivering in a manner suggestive of some feeling other than cold. Kafirs hate night-work, particularly such work as that we had on hand, and when rain and cold are added to the other discomforts, they are apt to collapse altogether. However, I determined to give him a lesson, and thinking it best to drive fear of the undertaking out of him by fear of me, I told him that if he dropped the light, or threw it down to run away, I would give

him one barrel of the rifle, a threat which—as I believe he really thought I would carry it out—had its effect, for he pulled himself together somewhat afterwards.

Once fairly in the footpath which ran along the summit of the high ridge, I took the lead and turned the light off, telling the boy to give me notice when we reached the spot by pulling my coat. We were nearly abreast of the kloof which lay on our left when I felt a warning pull from behind, and stopped at once; the boy then pointing to a dark patch of scrubby bush, which we could dimly see against the sky-line on the ridge to the right of the footpath, and distant some 50 yards. I stooped down and unlaced my boots, leaving them in the path, and, placing the lantern with them, gave the blue-lights to the boy—whom I had previously instructed how to hold them—and then turned off the footpath into the grass. We had not gone a dozen steps when the boy touched me on the arm, and pointed quickly down towards the grass and scrub below the footpath, and between it and the kloof. His quick ears had caught some sound unheard by me, and he whispered excitedly, “Ngito!” though for my part I could not tell what it was, whether leopard or aught else; I could merely hear sounds as of something rustling in the long grass, though but indistinctly. However, I saw that I must take the chance, and drawing the boy round to my right side, and pulling the plug out of the blue-light, I quickly drew it across the ignition-surface. The light flared up instantly, though with much hissing and spluttering, caused by the falling rain. My rifle was up simultaneously, as the boy again whispered “Ngito, baas—nantiya!” (“It is they, sir—there they are!”) At the same moment there was a quick rush through the grass, and I at once caught sight of one of the leopards standing in the blue glare of the light, about 20 yards from us, staring hard at us, and her eyes glowing brightly. She sprang away with deep angry growls as I fired, and I felt certain she had got the bullet somewhere: at the same instant the other leopard dashed through the grass towards the kloof, and I fired the second barrel at him, a snap-shot. We now went back along the path, and got the lantern and turned it on; and as the boy threw down the handle of the blue-light he uttered a deep sigh of relief, muttering in a ludicrous tone, as he shook his head slowly from side to side,

"He, baas—qa!" which means nothing particular in English, but a great deal in their own tongue. After dragging on my wet boots I suggested that we should go down together to the kloof, and see if we could find the one leopard which I was sure I had hit. Close to the footpath, and a little above the spot where the leopards had stood when we lit the flare-up, we came upon the carcass of the ox, which they had probably been dragging away when we came upon the scene, afraid to remain any length of time in so open a spot as that where they had been first disturbed by the boy. The bush at the top of the kloof was very dense and thorny (this is generally the case even with kloofs which, lower down, may be very open). We went a little way inside, and struck the other blue-light, but we could see nothing, and everything was still, so we had to give up our uncanny search.

Next morning early I took a couple of boys and some dogs, and visited the carcass; but the leopard had not returned after his scare, and was evidently unhurt, as there was no blood on his spoor. But just on the edge of the kloof, in some long grass, we found the leopardess lying dead, the heavy bullet having smashed her shoulder, raked the lungs, and passed out at a great hole in her flank: she had fallen dead about 12 yards from where she got the bullet. She measured 5 feet 11 inches, and was in rather poor condition; her fur was of a pale greyish-yellow colour. There was an old round Kafir bullet in her fore-shoulder, just under the skin, and doubtless it was this that had brought her down in condition, though the wound was very nearly healed.

It was a lucky thing she stood so well for the light. I have had many disappointments with these hill leopards, when trying to shoot them at night by these means.

And now, before we bid good-bye to the krantzes and kloofs over and through which we have together hunted our cunning and savage game, I will relate how nearly I closed my hunting career in a tussle with one of these always dangerous animals. The incident may serve as a warning to any who would wish to try their luck in similar country, where the leopard has almost every advantage upon his side; for he can escape unseen if so minded,

or charge from cover in which he has lain concealed from the sharpest eyes. The warning conveyed is that one's weapons and ammunition should be as perfect as can be obtained, for a miss-fire or a jammed cartridge may cost a man his life. There is no reason now in the world why, after all that has been written by skilful sportsmen—who are reliable authorities upon rifles and dangerous game-shooting—any one should start upon an expedition inadequately armed. It can be borne in mind that it is far better on the score of safety to have no weapon at all than an unreliable one; as, if unarmed, one is not at all anxious to come to close quarters with dangerous game, and, except in very rare instances, they will evince no desire to make man's near acquaintance; whereas, if armed, the sportsman will naturally wish to try conclusions with them, and if the weapon or cartridges used be unreliable and inaccurate, the hunter may very easily become the hunted. As I shall have a few words to say elsewhere about rifles and ammunition, I will leave the matter for the present with the above timely caution.

It happened in this wise. For several weeks prior to the day in question there had been but little rest after dark at any of the kraals in the vicinity of my house, a perfect plague of night marauders having taken the place by storm, as it were, and set to work methodically to kill off any sheep, goats, cattle, or dogs they could get hold of. There were leopards, hyænas, and wild-dogs (hunting-dogs), so that between them, it will be easily understood, we obtained little rest. The wild-dogs were fourteen or fifteen in number, and were the most destructive of all: in one instance they killed twelve goats, and devoured them in little over half an hour, in broad daylight and open country. The herd-boys had driven the goats to graze, and then left them for that space of time while they ran back to the kraal to get something to eat. On returning to their charge they found skulls, marrow-bones, hoofs, and shreds of hide! In a month they killed over a hundred head of goats and sheep. All they secured of mine was a young donkey, and the day after it was killed one of my boys again saw them hovering near, within 100 yards of the troop. I failed to get a shot, but that night the Assyrian came down with a vengeance in the shape of the whole pack, bent upon getting into the cattle or donkey kraals. I had

heard their peculiar and not unmusical cry about 11 P.M., after turning in, but it sounded far off, and my dogs sprang up at once and barked defiance; so I concluded they would keep careful look-out, and as I had myself seen to the security of all the kraals, the matter did not trouble me much. There is ever blood-feud between domestic dogs and these hyænine hunting-dogs; the former always exhibit the greatest restlessness and excitement when they hear the melancholy, whining bark of these animals. No ordinary dog would be a match for one of them unwounded, as they have most formidable jaws and teeth.

About 2 A.M. I was awakened by the sound of growling and fighting, and knew at once that the hunting-dogs were close at hand. Seizing a double 10 smooth-bore, with a round bullet in one barrel and 3 A shot in the other, I ran out at once to where I could hear the barking and general uproar. It was down below the stable, and I soon came on to my dogs barking vigorously at some dark objects clustered together a few yards beyond them, which upon my approach ran off. I fired both barrels at them: one dropped dead in his tracks, the bullet entering the back of his head—a most lucky shot for moonlight work—but what effect the shot had I could not tell just then. I found my boys standing round another wild-dog which the pack had killed, evidently having set upon him in a body. They remained down by the stable barking furiously till dawn, and then when I went out to them, ran down into the bush, and laid hold of a bitch that had been severely wounded by my shot, one hind-leg being broken: she had dragged herself into the bush, and had thus kept the dogs in a state of excitement during the remainder of the night. I quickly put her out of pain, and hoped that the lesson the brutes had received would render them less aggressive in future. As is their usual custom, they hung around the place for several days, calling for their companions, and one morning I saw eight or ten of them on a ridge 500 yards from the house. It was about 9 A.M., so I saddled a horse up and gave chase; but they took through some very thick cover, and I only succeeded in shooting another bitch, though I fired three or four shots at them. That same evening I shot one of two spotted hyænas, for which I had several times set a spring-gun; but they seemed possessed of Mephistophelian

cunning, for they invariably got the bait away without getting the bullet. On this night I secured a kid by the side of the waggon-road in a stout wattled cage, and had an easy shot about midnight, at a few yards' distance. The brute was a very large one, and old in years as in cunning, his canine teeth broken, the molar much worn, and only one incisor in each jaw being left.

But the leopards still remained, until on November 29 I shot the splendid dark male, as related. I found the remains of several duiker and 'msumbi about, and on the 3d December a dog having been taken from May's kraal, I got early on the spoor with half-a-dozen boys. It led us into a long straggling kloof with a number of small gullies running into it. We managed very badly that day, though, and I only obtained a long shot at the leopard at over 200 yards, as he was creeping along the edge of some bush, through the partially-burnt scrub. He jumped into the bush at once, then sprang out again next moment, and stood under a low thorn-tree. I fired again at him, and believed he was hit; but though we took his spoor a long way, we could not find blood. Some of the boys also declared he was hit, but we had to give him the benefit of the doubt, as we could not come up with him. We again beat that kloof and the next on the following day, but drew them blank. On the 5th the Kafirs set a spring-gun. During the night another dog was taken and the gun sprung, and when they went to the spot they found a large male leopard dead in front of the muzzle. I went up to the kraal when I heard of it, and we found a bullet-wound in the lower part of the hind-leg, just above the tarsus. It looked bad, and discharged matter copiously. It was plastered over with black mud. This was doubtless the leopard I had seen two days before, and thus slightly wounded.

But who stole the dog? Three days passed without any further alarm; but on the morning of the 9th I had occasion to go a mile or so along the waggon-road to where my cattle were feeding, and on my return at mid-day I came across the drag of a freshly-killed goat, apparently killed only a very few hours previously—certainly since dawn. This began to get monotonous. The leopard had left me alone of late, and just as I was hoping that the death of the two males might have its effect upon any wives or sweethearts who had hitherto saved their hides, I find

one of my goats taken in broad daylight, a few hundred yards only from the house. I was carrying an old Martini-Henry sporting-rifle at the time—more from habit than because I had expected to have any use for it—so without delay I took the spoor. The leopardess (as she proved to be) had killed the goat on a piece of very open ground at the head of a kloof, though at some distance from it, and had dragged it across the footpath into this kloof. Following this down for a distance of nearly 300 yards, it had crossed over a narrow spur which lay between this and the next kloof, and was covered with very long tangled grass. It did not remain in the next kloof, but merely crossed through it and emerged again on the end of the long spur running parallel to that on which my house stands, and divided from it by another long wooded kloof, from which we obtain our water-supply. Here it had dragged the carcass about from patch to patch, apparently desirous of finding one thick enough to afford it good shelter, and had eventually made for a very thorny thicket about 50 yards up the kloof, towards the house and close to a clear running stream. I think I disturbed her here, just as she reached the edge of the bush; for I found the carcass in a quite comparatively open spot, and fancy I heard her stealthy footsteps on the dead leaves as she moved away, though I would not run the risk of scaring her by running forward. The carcass was not torn in any way, only the fang-marks in the throat being visible; and as the spot seemed a suitable one for a shot at her on her return, I made a careful examination of the surrounding bush, with a view to trying my luck in the evening. It was necessary to drag the carcass a little distance, which I did with a hooked stick, and succeeded in so placing it that anything coming to it from below would be visible from a spot across the creek about 15 yards distant, and which could be approached from another spur than that across which the leopardess had dragged the kill, thus doing away with one of the chances of detection.

Rain fell during the afternoon, and by sundown there was so much promise of a stormy night that I was nearly giving up the idea of watching; but as the spot was very close to the house, and the chance of success seemed so great, I resolved to try it, and after having some tea, I donned an extra stout suit of clothes

and set out for the bush. The boys were instructed to sit up for a couple of hours, and then, if I did not return, they could go to sleep, leaving one of their number on watch in case I cooeyed for them. I took my old Martini again, as it could not damage with the rain, and was a very reliable, even if ancient, weapon; and I carried also a short stabbing assegai for use in emergencies. In my cartridge-belt were six or seven cartridges, one of British make, military pattern; the others—and now “read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest”—either of Transvaal make or a Transvaal issue of home-made cartridges. I will not disclose the well-known maker’s name, seeing that since that time the cartridges have improved, though the improvement came none too soon. I have heard more questionable language used over them than over anything else connected with shooting. One might get twenty that would fire all right, and accurately up to—well, say 100 yards; seven out of the next ten would miss fire. One seldom gets more than one shot, however, at night, and I relied upon the one cartridge which I knew would not fail me.

The gloom of evening was fast gathering round, augmented by the darkening storm-clouds and the sharply falling rain, when I approached the spot I had selected in the morning for my night’s watch. At this place the bank sloped evenly down to the small stream which ran through the kloof: it was covered with low brushwood, and a few lofty straight-stemmed *mhlumi*-trees grew here and there. Across the stream the bank was from 8 to 9 feet high, a dense tangle of thorny jungle growing to within a few feet of the edge; and close to this I had placed the kill, anticipating an easy shot when the leopardess came to drag it into the thicker bush, as she certainly would do before starting to eat it. When I took up my post everything was still—not a sound fell upon my ears but the constant patter of the rain on the leaves, and the muttering of distant thunder away in the south-east. It was gloomily dark in the kloof, though I could see the other bank plainly enough, and from the moment of my arrival had fixed my attention upon a dark object, which I believed to be the carcass of the goat, close to a peculiarly-twisted sapling by which I had marked the spot in the morning. But no sound, no movement, betrayed the presence of the game I sought, and at last it became so dark that I knew it would be impossible to get a shot

if she did come. So, thinking I might perhaps detain her about the spot till morning by the semblance of a trap, I crossed the stream, intending to hang the kill up in one of the trees and return home, coming back in the morning with the dogs.

The opposite bank was muddy and slippery, and I had to catch hold of the bushes on top to pull myself up. I was in the act of climbing over the edge, when a low grating growl from the bush to my right caused me to hesitate. I could see nothing, but again came the ominous growl from some spot unpleasantly close to me, and made me tingle to my fingers' ends. To get on top of the bank, upon even ground with the brute, was my first thought; and then, without rising from my knees, and with rifle on full-cock, I peered in under the low bush. As I did so, a whitish-looking object attracted my attention. I knew it was not the kill, as the goat was a black one, and felt certain it was a portion of the white fur of the leopardess, probably the chest. The growling had ceased, but the position was so painfully exciting that I made up my mind to end it by firing at this suspicious object. Hoarse growls answered the shot, and the leopardess sprang through the bush, and fell over, kicking and struggling violently in the thorns a few paces in front of me. I had jumped to my feet at once, and got another cartridge in, watching eagerly for a chance to give her another shot. She appeared to kick herself along towards me through the scrub, and at last I saw her as she struggled into a small clear space between two little bushes. She seemed to catch sight of me at once as I raised my rifle, and righted herself, crouching very low and directly facing me. I could not have failed to kill her then, as she was so close, if only——! I touched the trigger—"click!" Out shot the useless cartridge, and another is pushed in, rapid aim taken, and the trigger touched again. "Click!"—another miss-fire! I dragged the lever down, and with the energy of despair jammed a third cartridge in. All the time, save for a peculiar grating gurgling sound in the brute's throat, she lay quiet, and I half thought she was unable to spring—that is, if I thought of anything in those seconds which appeared hours to me. But as I got this third cartridge in, I knew she was coming on. There was no time to fire, and as I stepped back a pace and threw the rifle up, holding it across my face with both hands, and still

retaining the assegai in my right, she sprang forward, growling loudly, and, seizing the stock in her teeth, carried me backwards over the bank, the rifle being discharged either by the shock, or perhaps by my having unconsciously touched the trigger. I fell into a thick patch of thorns, just under the bank and partly against the spreading roots of an old gnarled and knotted tree which grew close to the bush. I lost my hold of the rifle, and the assegai fell under me and broke short off, leaving about a foot of the shaft attached to the blade. Fortunately I retained



"She sprang forward, and . . . carried me backwards over the bank."

my hold of this, and as she fixed her teeth in my coat and tore the whole front of it away together with the shirt underneath, I gripped her by the cheek with the left hand, and drove the blade two or three times deep into her chest and shoulder. Her hot breath nearly stifled me, and I was quickly covered with blood from her mouth and wounds. She had soon torn every rag from me with her claws, till I was bleeding from head to foot. What happened afterwards I cannot clearly say; all I remember is endeavouring with my utmost strength to keep her

teeth from my neck, and to drive the broken assegai into her chest. Lucky indeed was it for me that I had fallen into that bush, as it was so thick and thorny that she could not get at me fairly. Then the intense pain when she caught me near the groin with her teeth as my strength gave out, and then—blank!

When I came to myself I was lying half in the water, the assegai still in my hand, and my antagonist nowhere to be seen. It was quite dark, but the rain had ceased, though it was lightning at intervals, close at hand. I felt cold and regularly done up, but knowing that I must endeavour to get home somehow, I pulled myself together and washed my face in the stream. While searching for my rifle I found my torn coat, which I wrapped round me, as everything else had gone, and then tried to raise a decent "cooeey." This was quite beyond me, so, using my trusty assegai as a stick, I started to climb the ridge for home. It was hard work, and proved beyond my strength; for as I reached the brow of the ridge I must have fainted again. When I came to I was in my own bed, with a group of anxious boys round me, and some three or four Kafir doctors in consultation! Cold water, carbolic oil, and a good constitution came to my assistance, and in less than two months afterwards I was about again.

My boys found the leopardess dead about 400 yards from the spot where she had tackled me, my first bullet having gone through one of her lungs; and my rifle with its fang-torn stock was also recovered.

My boys told me that when they were about to turn in, one of them made a remark to the effect that it was strange I had not returned, nor had they heard any shooting. "Oh," said the little nipper who herded the goats, "he fired long ago. I heard the shot when I went down to draw water!" They at once suspected something was wrong, and calling all the dogs up, set out in two parties, one down each ridge, towards the spot where I had been watching; and on the brow of the easternmost ridge my little pointer Sabi found me lying, and they at once carried me home.

It is evident that the leopardess had returned to her kill long before I reached the spot, and had dragged it into the bush where she lay when I first fired at her: probably she had come back soon after I left the place in the morning, as the boys found both hind-legs of the goat eaten. It would have been far wiser to have

retired gracefully when she first gave warning of her presence, as I do not think there would have been any danger of her attacking had I retreated.

I never used those cartridges again: possibly I made a mistake in throwing out the bad ones from the breech, as frequently they would go off upon a second trial; but one does not reason such matters out when cornered as I was. Anyway, they nearly cost me my life, while carrying an assegai probably saved it. It was lucky also that I had on the extra clothing, and I no doubt escaped better than I deserved to have done.

In concluding the relation of these incidents descriptive of the chase of the hill-leopard, I would say that I think I have established the claim of our African variety to an equal amount of ferocity, daring, and cunning with its Indian relative, and the fact that they are game well worth the attention of sportsmen, deserving to be fairly hunted, to the exclusion of all such mean and cowardly contrivances as spring-guns, traps, and poisoned carcasses. For my part, I trust the day may be far distant when the opportunity will be no longer afforded me of trying conclusions with them, or when the cry of "*Ingwe!*" shall no longer act as a charm upon me, urging me to reach down my trusty rifle from the rack, and eagerly join the merry band of hunters as they hasten to attack the daring marauder, the *mtakati wa 'mahlati*, the "evil spirit of the woods," in his forest lair!

PART II.

THE BUSH-VELDT



Record Klipspringer ram's head. Horns 5½ inches.

CHAPTER XIV.

BLUE WILDEBEESTE-HUNTING.

Memories—Victims to the rifle—Large troops of wildebeeste—Their likes and dislikes—Assume leadership of other game—Companions to giraffe—Their inquisitiveness—Instinctive perception of danger—Speed and endurance—Wonderful vitality—Wounded animals with a troop—Appearances against them—Erratic movements—The Eland Kopjes—A day after wildebeeste—Dangerous riding-ground—*Vlak-vark*—Disturbed—“There they are!”—The signal to move—The leader down—A tail-on-end race—The troop splits up—Cutting off a corner—A good spin—Wildebeeste as swimmers—Lost spoor—Taking to water—Unable to swim—Food for crocodiles—Not always charging—A headlong rush—Left in the lurch—A sassaby bull—A wonderful scene—Alive with game—Cutting in—A magnificent bull—Spread-eagled—Very like a charge—Out of the jaws of death—A tough old stallion—A neck shot—A chance for the camera—“Run, run, baas!”—In full flight—He objects to photography—Master of the situation—Measurements—Easily tamed—Awkward pets—Not his mother!

IN the introductory chapter of this work I have endeavoured to convey to the mind of the reader as clearly as possible some idea of the nature of the "bush-veldt," "Low Country," "hunting-veldt," or "jacht-veldt," as it is variously termed by English and Boer hunters.

To the uninitiated, doubtless the description will have suggested a country which at the best is not very greatly to be desired, notwithstanding the grand opportunities which it offers for sport; while it is just possible that its apparently endless sameness, its waterless tracts, its sandy ridges covered with harsh thorny vegetation, its crocodile-haunted streams and pools, its teeming animal life, and the too-frequent visitation of its presiding deity—malarial fever—proclaim it a country to be altogether shunned.

But to those fortunate ones who have been duly initiated into its mysteries, how vastly different the prospect! What glorious memories of the past does it not awaken in their minds? Of friendships formed with good fellows and plucky sportsmen, never to be broken on this side of shadow-land; of days of wild excitement and stirring adventure; of mad gallops after the flying sable, the great striding giraffe, or the fleet timorous ostrich; of the merry gatherings around the evening camp-fire, when the heavy inflammable logs are piled up till the crackling flames leap ten feet into the air, their cheery blaze illumining the surrounding bush for many yards outside the kraal-fence, and the story of the day's doings is rehearsed with glad laughter and inimitable gesture by both white and black, the while the well-groomed horses—their noses deep in the canvas cribs—contentedly munch their evening meal, and the surfeited oxen lay themselves down, with grunts of satisfaction, for their night's rest; of the lonely moonlight watches by the lion's kill, with the waving grass and the whispering trees around, and the starry glories of the southern hemisphere studding the dark blue arch above; and of still solemn nights, the hours of which have been spent listening to that grandest of all music, the lions' deep-toned roaring! The memory of such scenes must ever stir the heart of those who have participated in them, even when the weak flesh no longer answers to the behests of the still willing spirit, and when the trusty rifles—upon whose accuracy many a time and oft life

itself has been staked—are laid aside, or hung up amongst the trophies of the chase!

There is no animal so frequently met with in the Low Country, or which will attract so much attention to itself whether the sportsman will or not, as the quaint omnipresent blue wildebeeste, the brindled gnu of science; and as their hides have considerable marketable value for converting into the best "riems," and they show good sport to a mounted man, they are probably greater victims to the rifle than any other of the larger antelopes. But for the astonishing numbers in which they existed a few years ago, they must long ere this have become extinct, few animals being more eagerly sought after by the itinerant hide-hunter than these.

Wildebeeste are gregarious, going about in troops of ten or fifteen, up to as many as fifty or sixty individuals; and I have seen far larger troops even quite lately. On one occasion riding out on to an extensive area of new grass—a large clearing in the midst of some thick thornbush—I found it positively alive with these antelope: I believe they numbered considerably over two hundred. But they are most peculiar creatures in their likes and dislikes. Undoubtedly fond of the society of their own species, they yet appear equally at home in that of other animals, showing a marked partiality for giraffe, ostriches, and Burchell's zebra. Impala are frequently found in their company, but I think *they* seek that of the wildebeeste, rather than the latter theirs. Bulls frequently run together in little troops, which, however, usually keep to themselves, and seldom join other animals. Solitary shaggy old bulls, on the contrary, thrust their company upon sable antelope, Burchell's zebra, and giraffe; and I have even seen them with water-buck, and, more rarely, with koodoo. When these wary old fellows take up with a troop of sassaby, the sportsman, no matter how well he may be mounted, will not be long before he cries, "Hold, enough!" for both are devils to go, tail-on-end gallop, mile after mile: their speed and endurance are simply marvellous. These old bulls are a great nuisance also with sable antelope. The latter, though possessed of great speed, are naturally inclined to gallop easily, and to stand frequently; but if they have a wildebeeste with them, they appear to place themselves resignedly in his care, while he, put-

ting himself at their head, will lead one a fine dance under such circumstances. The best plan, then, is to try and stop the wildebeeste first: it is worth a little trouble to do this, as in the end it will save your horse a lot. Almost all antelopes will thus accept the leadership of a wildebeeste, but giraffe and ostriches seldom do—invariably striking out on a line for themselves, in whatever direction instinct tells them they can soonest reach a place of safety.

It is most amusing at times to watch what appear to be the frantic endeavours of the wildebeeste to induce giraffe to follow where they lead, though whether such is actually their motive or not, of course it is impossible to say: their actions, however, have every appearance of it. They will race round, first to one side, then to the other, backwards and forwards, in front of their giant companions, rushing wildly to and fro at times almost under the giraffe's legs, then running steadily abreast of them for a little distance; but not for long,—suddenly, as by given signal, down go their heads and up their heels, and with swishing tails they recommence manœuvring round the giraffe, till, weary and disgusted at the want of sense displayed by those whom they would assist, they turn out and leave them to their fate.

During the heat of the day wildebeeste will almost invariably be found lying down in some shady hollow, or standing motionless, save for the frequent swishing of their long black tails. They move off to feed during the afternoon as the shadows lengthen, usually drinking about sundown, and again early in the morning. Few animals evince greater curiosity at the sight of any strange object, and it apparently takes them a long while to make up their minds as to the nature of any danger which threatens. Sometimes, if disturbed when lying down, they will jump to their feet and form up in a long black line in the shade of the trees, and stand staring hard at the intruder: one can with ease approach to within 50 yards of a troop in this way. At other times they will run a short distance, then wheeling round broadside, halt suddenly, turning their heads towards the suspected danger, and constantly swishing their tails: then one will make a feint to rush off, darting aimlessly to and fro in the rear of the troop, and back again towards its companions,

till at last some wary old bull commences pawing the ground, snorting viciously and blowing the bot-fly larvæ from his broad muzzle, then, giving the signal to the rest of the troop, he rushes off at their head at speed through the bush. Individual animals, however, are not to be thus caught napping, and seldom allow a nearer approach than 120 yards; and I have known even troop animals under certain circumstances to be very shy; in fact, they seem to know instinctively when danger threatens, and while at times they will permit of a very close approach on the part of a spectator—even if he is carrying a rifle—the same animals will dart off without delay if they detect “murder in his eye.” There must be a something in a man’s actions which, unknown to himself, discloses to the watchful game what his intentions are, and they act accordingly.

When once wildebeeste are started they go very hard, with great speed and endurance; in fact, with perhaps the one exception of the sassaby, I think they surpass all the larger antelopes in this respect, and it would be hard to swear which of these two is the faster, for I have certainly seen individual wildebeeste run as fast and as far as any sassaby. With this latter animal also, they share the credit of being considered the toughest of all antelopes: if shot anywhere through the barrel, they will go to all eternity, invariably running the hardest and fastest at the head of the troop. If the sportsman is on foot, and sees that one of the troop is hard hit, he should lose no time in following up the spoor, as the animal will very probably lie down quickly, on or close to it, seldom turning out to go any distance. I have frequently secured wildebeeste in this manner. When the shot is fired they may scatter somewhat at first, but will very soon run together again, making it quite impossible to pick out the wounded one amongst the crowd, especially when, as usually happens, they are enveloped in a dense cloud of dust. By following the spoor one stands a very good chance of coming upon the wounded animal lying down; but if they are pressed by a mounted man, they quickly turn out and run off by themselves.

Care should always be taken not to approach unduly close to a wounded bull, as I have known them charge very determinedly upon occasions; and there is no question as to their capability

of doing serious harm. Naturally, however, they are very quiet and inoffensive brutes, though one might imagine them otherwise, appearances being against them—their curved buffalo-like horns, shaggy manes, flowing beards, and rough frontlets giving them a decidedly savage aspect.

The movements of a troop when running away from danger are always interesting. If scattered parties are lying or standing about when the alarm is given, they seldom make a general move until each party-leader has satisfied himself that some form of danger actually exists, and then, after the customary evolutions of advance and retreat, a few of the more timorous ones wheel round and make off, quickly followed by the others, pell-mell, in no sort of order, for a few hundred yards; but falling into line at last, one behind the other, they will run on thus for miles, every twist and turn made by the leader being so accurately followed by those in the rear that they assume the appearance of some huge black snake moving with undulating motion through the grass, so perfectly is the formation maintained. The eccentric manoeuvres performed by some wildebeeste on getting a bullet are very ludicrous: they will rush rapidly round and round in a circle, then suddenly falling forward, and making as it were a pivot of their head, twist round with surprising speed, and in a cloud of dust; recovering themselves, they will dart away at a tangent, perhaps against some tree or thick bush, and there commence leaping and capering about, whisking their tails and bellowing loudly; again starting off, and running first in one direction, then in another, in a very similar manner to that in which a dragon-fly darts through the air, till at length they appear to make up their minds as to the direction in which they wish to go, and after a few hundred yards of a zigzag course run at top speed, they settle down to business, and will then take some catching.

Let me here instance a typical day's wildebeeste-shooting.

Our waggon stands outspanned on the edge of a small clearing in the otherwise low but thick bush on the north side of the Manzimtonti river, and form a comfortable camp, with good water within 100 yards, and near to long stretches of young sweet grass, which has sprung up since the February "burns," and upon which our horses and cattle are so intent that they wander

but a very short distance from the camp. About 200 yards distant a small stony kopje, rising out of the surrounding bush, forms a very remarkable feature of the landscape. It is the lowest of the straggling group comprising the Eland Kopjes—thus called from the elands, which but a few years ago were to be found in considerable numbers in their vicinity.

We reached this camp last night; and as a few days will put us into the big-game veldt proper, we have resolved to stay over the day, and try for a shot at wildebeeste to replenish our larder, and prevent the necessity for further delays on the road to secure meat. We saddle up two good nags, mount our after-riders on two others, and with half-a-dozen boys on foot, strike out towards the kopjes, rounding the base of the smaller one, and crossing in front of the others till we reach a spot where a number of large boulders, detached from the main kopje, lay piled up in a great mass, and from the summit of which, with but little trouble, we can obtain a good view of the surrounding bush. Leaving our horses below, we clamber up, and for a quarter of an hour or so carefully examine with our glasses the bush-clad ridges which lie beneath and beyond us. Nothing, however, appears in sight to reward our search; so we are soon in the saddle again, and riding over a wide and irregular plain covered with great, flat, slippery masses of bed-rock, which everywhere crop to the surface—a terrible place to race over in pursuit of game. We head over towards a long strip of thin bush at the far end of the flat, and when we are within 200 yards of it a big *vlak-vark* (wart-hog) sow, followed by four half-grown ones, races across our front, with its tufted tail held erect, after the ridiculous manner of its kind—a feat which her progeny strive to emulate. My companion nips off his horse, and the sharp report of his rifle is answered by a loud “clop”; the pig runs groggily forward for 30 yards, then, turning a complete somersault, falls dead, before the eager boys can get up to finish her with an assegai. We despatch one of their number back to camp at once with the pig, and again resume our course toward the bush.

The wind is very shifty, and we ride for an hour before seeing anything; but at last, just on the edge of a somewhat extensive tract of bush, we get fresh spoor, an examination of which convinces us that the game, having probably caught some taint in

the air, has made off up wind. It is unlikely, however, that they will go any great distance; so, carefully scanning the bush ahead and on either side of us, we keep steadily on in the direction taken by the troop, till we emerge on the other side of the thicket, and out into a small open space, glowing brightly in the warm sunlight. Ahead of us another broad belt of trees, and—"There they are, look, standing by that dark bush!" A slight movement, as one of them faces round to get a fair view of us, and we can now plainly make out the black mass huddled together in the deep shade of some low thorn-trees, and looking like anything but game, save for the restless swishing tails and the occasional toss of a dark horned head. They are about 150 yards distant, but before we can approach any closer so as to be better able to pick our shots out of the closely-grouped mass, a low snort gives the signal to the troop. In an instant they have wheeled—down go all heads, tails are whisked sharply against their haunches, and away they go, in purposeless confusion, in and out amongst the thickly-growing trees, and we at once break into a sharp gallop, my companion riding wide of me and a little to the left, his restive stallion cutting out the pace in good style. The bush is somewhat thinner on ahead, and the wildebeeste are going easily now, and evidently very little alarmed. One old bull leaves the troop, running slightly to one side, then turns sharp off to the right across my front. We are now close up, and before the bull comes to a stand we pull in and dismount. Round comes the troop, wheeling splendidly, but scarcely has the leading bull halted when our rifles ring out: the old troop-leader drops dead in his tracks with a broken neck; another falls to his knees, recovers himself, twists round and round in rapid circles, then vanishes behind the screen of yellow dust kicked up by the thundering hoofs of the retreating troop. We are after them instantly, though for some distance we can see nothing but the stifling dust-cloud, from whence every now and again darts out a black form, which, after doing a little skirmishing on the flanks of the troop, again disappears from view. Then the wounded bull turns out, the pace is too hot for him, and as he strikes off to the left he sends the dust flying up along his track as from a ricochet bullet. "There's your bull, H——, give him another shot!" And my compan-

ion reins in, but before he is clear of the stirrups the old bull, uttering a deep groan, falls headlong.

Now for it! We get well down in our saddles, give our nags their heads, and in five minutes are hammering along again in the rear of the troop. They do not appear to hurry, but we are conscious of the fact that they nevertheless keep their distance; and that they have the heels of us is very evident the next time we jump down, for as our rifles ring out, one and all get their heads well down and rush off, scattering in all directions, and with apparently no more exertion to themselves than hitherto. But we gradually pull up on them again, and the troop splits up, my companion and his after-rider going off with the main body, while I stick to a little clump of five or six, amongst which is a fine cow which I hit with my last shot. She keeps in front of the rest, and we cover another mile at racing pace before she shows any sign of flagging, though her hind-quarters are red with blood; but a 540-grains solid bullet is no joke even to so staunch and tough a customer as a wildebeeste, and she at last begins to drop behind. Letting my horse out, and riding a little wide, I am quickly alongside of her, and dismounting, give her a shot, bringing her to a stand; then as she walks aimlessly forward again, a third through the shoulders—she totters, and with a surly grunt falls to the ground.

Ere she is down I am again in the saddle in pursuit of the remainder, amongst which is another full-grown bull—my good nag still going well and strong. Across a wide, open grass plain they lay themselves out to run, and shape so well at it that I feel inclined to give them best; but seeing they are running in a half circle, and evidently making for another belt of timber on our right, I head away over a long shallow "pan," a vile bit of ground covered with grass and riddled with antbear-holes. Luckily for us both, my horse negotiates these in safety, though my unfortunate after-rider comes a heavy cropper, but eventually regains his saddle. Once across the pan, it is evident we have gained on the wildebeeste considerably, and using the spurs for the first time, my gallant nag answers gamely, and once more puts me on even terms with the game just as they enter the bush. I *roll* out of the saddle first chance (under such circumstances one cannot wait till a horse stands, hence the reason that

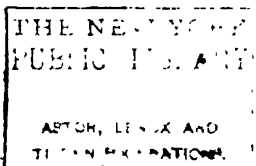
sportsmen out here prefer an animal of 14 or 14½ hands for a shooting-pony), and get in a good shot at the big bull, for immediately upon receiving it he wheels short round, and comes charging blindly past me at a distance of not more than 20 yards. Another bullet as he dashes past, aimed for the ear—but which, as I afterwards found, struck the base of the horn—staggers him, and yet again he wheels, and pulling up, stands facing me, snorting loudly, and throwing blood-tinged foam from his mouth. He looks decidedly mischievous now, but has little time to make up his mind to anything, for a bullet between the eyes floors him. Leaving the boy to cover him up, I ride over to the spot where I dropped the cow, and soon fall in with H—coming up with the boys. We had each secured three wildebeeste, so, well pleased with our spin, we give the necessary instructions to the boys, and ride campwards together.

I cannot say whether wildebeeste are able to swim, for I never saw them try to cross deep water; but on one occasion I witnessed a singular incident, which at the time led me to think they could not do so. I was hunting on foot near the junction of the Mjindana and Mabutsha rivers, and having hit a good koodoo bull hard, had followed him into an extensive *gwarra* thicket, where I lost the spoor amongst the numerous tracks of other game. Catching sight of an animal standing in the thicket, the nature of which neither I nor my boy could determine, I fired at it. It dashed off, and we followed on the spoor, evidently that of a big wildebeeste bull: it led us to the edge of a deep pool, 300 yards long by about 25 yards wide, with 10-foot-high banks. Hearing something splashing in the water, which we at first thought was a crocodile, I clambered down to the edge with difficulty through the tangled reeds and other vegetation on the banks, and saw a wildebeeste struggling in the water, and apparently drowning. Thinking I had hit my animal and that this was the identical one, I finished him with a bullet in the back of the head. He was too heavy for us to drag ashore; but we quite satisfied ourselves upon one point—viz., that I had missed him with my first shot, the bullet probably glancing from some intervening branch or tree-stem. The only bullet-hole in the animal was the one in the back of the head which killed him, and yet I feel sure that if we had left him alone he would have drowned. It

is just possible a crocodile may have seized his hind-leg, but the water was clear, and we could see the legs plainly, and there did not appear to be any mark of a crocodile's teeth upon either of them. We returned with boys next day to try and drag him out and examine him further, but of course during the night the crocodiles had dragged him in under the bank, and we—having no wish to furnish a repast for these loathsome brutes—yielded the point. The broad muzzle and chin of this wildebeeste were perfectly white, the nostrils alone being black, and I regret not having secured the head in the first instance, as it was a curiosity. I have frequently seen patches of white on the muzzle, usually on the upper lip, but in this instance it was entirely white.

I have already referred to the fact that occasionally old wildebeeste bulls will charge very viciously. I have known instances of this occurring to others, and on more than one occasion it has occurred to myself. It is sometimes, however, difficult to assert that an animal is actually charging with intent to do harm: frequently the blind forward rush of a wounded beast has every appearance of a determined charge, whereas the animal is really only rushing aimlessly forward without any thought of the direction in which it is going. The following incident is a case in point. While travelling up through the Low Country on my return from England in 1893, I came across a small lot of wildebeeste, eight or ten in number, I think—though, owing to the dense nature of the bush, it was difficult to tell for certain. My hunting Kafir May was with me, and I was carrying a double 12 rifle, taking 2½-ounce conical bullets. I dropped one with the first barrel, the bullet raking a wildebeeste “fore and aft,” and as I reloaded, I saw five or six others running round us in a half-circle, at about 80 yards, at top-speed, and headed by a very fine old bull. I took him between the neck and shoulder, and floored him, bellowing; but in an instant he was on his legs again, and coming down on top of us like a railway engine, snorting loudly. The boy and I stood fast, and when he was close up I fired into his head, dropping him all of a heap. That bull had not the remotest intention of charging us; probably he would have been as surprised as we should have been—though perhaps less damaged—had he bowled one or both of us over.

Whether in the next instance which I will relate the wilde-



he was just "spoiling" for a run; but I could do nothing else than sit in silent admiration. The zebra had meanwhile come round behind me and crossed my wind, while the wildebeeste and koodoo were running about here and there, some of them standing looking at me, appearing to have perfect confidence in their numbers. But as soon as ever they saw the retreating zebra, the alarm spread quickly; the waterbuck, thirty or more in number, turned down towards the river, the wildebeeste got their heads down between their forelegs and thundered away after the zebra, the koodoo and impala following them more leisurely. It was a never-to-be forgotten sight,—the whole place was alive with game; at a rough estimate I should think there were fully a hundred and fifty wildebeeste, over a hundred Burchells, thirty or more koodoo, and at least two hundred impala.

As they moved off I slackened the reins, and cantered along behind them, keeping a little above wind. I had no particular object in view,—the sight was so bewildering I could scarcely make up my mind what head I wished to secure, and I would have been content to have ridden all day with such a sight before me. Away they galloped, whirling along over a wide, red-sand flat, till absolutely nothing of all their packed masses was visible, only a dense cloud of penetrating dust which covered the whole plain. Then they raced off on to a long strip of burnt ground where the black ash-dust was even worse than the sand. The effect produced on such occasions by the vagaries of individual wildebeeste which dart out from the packed ranks of their companions, and rush blindly here and there on the outskirts of the troop, rolling up the black ash in great heavy smoke like puffs at every stride, is very remarkable, while at intervals from out the dust-cloud came the loudly reiterated cry of the startled zebras, "Kwa-ha, kwa-ha, kwa-ha!" But at the pace at which we travelled, we very soon left the burnt ground behind us, and ran through a splendid piece of park-like country, covered with low grass and a few scattered thorn-trees; and here the various troops began to split up, and the pace slackened. I quickly ran in amongst them, sending them flying in all directions, the brightly coloured impala leaping and springing about in bewildering confusion, before, behind, and on either side. Two fine old wildebeeste bulls ran but a few paces off on my left, some long-legged,

large-eared koodoo cows, with three or four young calves close on my right, while just ahead a grand old bull cantered lazily along, his massive spiral horns, black and ivory-tipped, laid well back above his shoulders, and the white stripes on the flanks showing out with striking clearness on the soft blue-grey of the hide. He looked indeed a magnificent creature, but, as is too often the case, his great beauty was the cause of his undoing, for as soon as he heard me clattering along behind him, he turned slightly off to the left, and, slackening his pace as I jumped down, was just about to come to a stand, when, as he turned broadside, I placed a bullet fair in the centre of his shoulder. A heavy stumble, a mad forward rush for 50 or 60 yards, and before I was again in the saddle he rolled over dead.

I had seen another good bull running with this one, but as he was now no longer in sight, and thinking he had probably gone off with some of the cows—which by this time had split up into several small troops—I turned my attention to a lot of four or five wildebeeste bulls, one at least of which I could see carried a fine head. It did not take long to cut these out—in company with some impala and two koodoo cows—from the rest of the game; when I raced them over a long grass flat, in the middle of which I jumped down and fired at the best bull, bringing him down spread-eagled on the ground. I saw he was not dead, and would have ridden up and given him another shot, had I not just at the moment caught sight of the other koodoo bull away up in a strip of bush to my right. He was not going fast, merely cantering along the edge of the bush, inside; but as it was very thick, I had to hurry up or there was a good chance of losing him. And after all I was too late: he probably caught sight of me, and turned off farther into the bush, where I lost all trace of him, and after riding some distance through it, gave up the search, and returned towards the spot where I had left the wildebeeste lying. I had marked the place by a little patch of thick bush growing close to a large thorn-tree near the middle of the flat, but on turning my horse in that direction, I noticed two or three similar bushes scattered about on the plain. However, I rode straight across to the most likely looking of them, a clump of low scrubby bush with a few long saplings growing in the centre. I felt certain the bull was unable to get

away, or even to rise, as by the way he fell it appeared as though the bullet had broken the sacral vertebræ; so I rode close up to the patch, looking round on all sides, and over and through the bush. I could not see anything of him, however, and was about to ride right through the scrub, when I heard a grunt, and at once saw the wildebeeste jump to his feet and come straight at me. I very quickly turned my horse short round, and, giving him the spurs, galloped off clear of the bush—just as the old bull came out, passing exactly over the spot where my horse had been standing a moment before. I now pulled in quickly and jumped down, giving him a shot in the shoulder, but too far back. He wheeled round at once, and stood eyeing me in a most vicious manner. I was about to give him a shot in the head, when his hind-quarters gave way, and with a surly grunt he rolled over on his side, dead. My first bullet had completely disabled him for the time, paralysing the hind-quarters, but the vertebræ were not touched as I at first thought; the second bullet had passed through one of his lungs.

It may be worth noticing that when I went to examine the koodoo bull—a magnificent animal, carrying a pair of widespread horns 58 inches over the curve—I found that he had been terribly torn and bitten about the head and neck, probably by a leopard. One of the brute's fangs had entered just above the right eye, making a clean punctured wound into which my little finger would enter, and from which blood and serum were still oozing; the base of the ear was also badly bitten, and there were a few claw-marks on the shoulder and on the horns. Poor brute! he must have had a hard tussle for his life. It was certainly either a leopard or a young lion that he had fallen foul of, as he would never have escaped from the clutches of a full-grown lion.

It is not by any means an unfrequent occurrence to find animals thus wounded—that have escaped from the very jaws of death, as it were; and I have always remarked that in such cases the wounds are invariably on the face, shoulders, or hind-quarters, and never, or very seldom, in the throat or neck—the place usually seized by a lion or leopard. So it would seem as if, when once these animals seize their prey fairly by throat or neck, escape is hopeless and the beast is killed; but when, either

from inexperience or from the attack having been made when the animal is running away, the lion or leopard perforce springs on its shoulders and tears its face, or seizes the hind-quarters and tries to drag it down, there is a chance of escape. I believe that a koodoo bull, by rushing at speed through thick cover, could sweep a leopard or a half-grown lion off its back, though a mature lion would of course drag it down at once by its mere weight and the impetus of its rush. A Burchell's zebra, however, one would imagine, stands but little chance, as they cannot rush through thick cover as can a sable antelope or a koodoo; and yet the most seriously wounded animal that I have ever known to escape from such a fix was an old zebra stallion. I shot him close to the "Simana Kopjes" near the Nguanetsi, as he appeared to be a magnificent specimen, and I required such a one for mounting. To my astonishment, when I went up to examine him as he lay dead, I found that he was almost flayed alive: the skin was hanging in ragged strips from his shoulders and hind-quarters, the off foreleg fearfully mangled, and the face and head so torn that the frontal bone was exposed, one eye gone, and the right ear hanging in shreds. The poor brute was a living, seething mass of maggots and blow-flies; and if ever there was a merciful shot fired, that was the one that laid him low. It looked like the work of probably two half-grown lions, and the boys who were with me coincided in that opinion. I do not think the poor wretch escaped of his own accord: either the lions were frightened off, or he may have been assisted by the heels of his troop. At all events, he had better have succumbed at first with a good grace than have escaped to endure that living death.

Whatever may have been the intention of the old wildebeeste bull on the occasion I have just related, another one that I shot during the hunting season of 1891 left no doubt as to his desire to efface somebody; and as the incident is somewhat amusing, I shall record it here.

I was returning one evening with Muntumuni from a visit to a friend's camp some eight miles distant from mine. We were both well mounted, and I was carrying my favourite single Metford, and the boy a sporting Field-Henry rifle. When close to my camp, and riding along the banks of a stream amongst

a lot of thick overhanging bush, a wildebeeste bull suddenly sprang away in front of us, and, running about 100 yards, turned broadside on, and stood. He carried a fine head, which I determined to secure if possible; so as he turned round, I was already on the ground, and gave him a shot. He dropped on the spot without a kick, but I knew that meant a neck-shot and speedy recovery; and in an instant he was on his legs again, and darted off, zigzagging through the bush in a most disconcerting manner, rushing and wheeling about to right and left, so that it was most difficult to get a sight on him at all. I found the mark, however, as I could tell by the loud "clap" that followed the shot; but he increased his pace if anything, so I got on my horse and galloped after him, Muntumuni having already started, so as to keep him in sight through the bush. The bull eventually ran into an extensive *gwarra* thicket, where we lost sight of him; but we pushed on as hard as we could, and on the other side of the thicket came to a large open spot in the bush, covered with long grass. I had expected to have been close on his heels here, but to our astonishment he was nowhere to be seen; so we headed slightly away, thinking he must have turned up along the edge of the bush, and did not care to face the open. Suddenly the boy, who was riding alongside of me, pulled up, and pointed to where, beside a small bush in the middle of the open ground, and almost completely hidden by the long grass, lay our bull. We could just make out the outline of his back and his horns over the grass-tops, and it suddenly occurred to me that it would be a good opportunity of using my camera, as I could focus the bush, and then make the bull stand up. So we rode back into the bush, and dismounting, I left the boy to watch the wildebeeste, and, jumping on to his horse, rode to camp. My camera was in the waggon ready for use, so in less than half an hour I was back again at the spot where I left Muntumuni. The wildebeeste had been lying quiet all the time; so as soon as the instrument was ready we hitched our horses up, and cautiously advanced together to the edge of the patch of grass in which the wounded bull lay, the boy carrying my rifle, having left his with the horses. Even on our approach the bull still lay quiet, though, as he was exactly facing us, he must have been aware of our presence, and was just "foxing." Telling Muntumuni to

lay the rifle down, and to kneel underneath the tripod to steady the instrument, I proceeded to focus the bush near which was the wildebeeste; but just as I had the black cloth over my head, the boy whispered, "Iya sukuma" ("It's getting up"). I barely caught a glimpse of him on the ground-glass, when there was a great upheaval of tripod and camera, a hoarse shout of "Gijima, gijima, baas!" ("Run, run, sir!"), and I became aware that the bull was coming for us. Next instant we were doing all we knew across that piece of open ground, the boy in one direction,



A bull wildebeeste objects to being photographed.

with the tripod clattering about his heels, and I in another with the black cloth trailing behind. There had been no time to pick up the rifle, upon which the bull very deliberately trampled, and when I pulled up it was from sheer inability to go any farther for laughing. I stood and surveyed the situation—Muntumuni, 100 yards away, also laughing immoderately, but hanging on to my camera like a leech; the bull in between us, grunting low, and glancing from one to the other, as if weighing in his mind the chances in favour of another charge. As it was evident, however, that he would not permit a second attempt at photo-

graphing him, and every minute was but adding needlessly to his pain, I ran across to the horses, and, taking the other rifle, walked up towards our surly friend with it. He looked uncommonly wicked as I approached, frequently lowering his head and snorting, pawing the ground with one forefoot. I gave him no chance, however, to charge again, but when within twenty paces of him fired into his head, and dropped him. He was an exceptionally fine bull, and carried the widest pair of horns I have ever secured, measuring 2 feet 3 inches in a straight line between the inside bends. I have seen a yet larger pair, purchased by some friends of mine from a Boer. I had no opportunity of measuring them, however, but think they must have been 29 or 30 inches between the bends. The blue wildebeeste inhabiting this thick bush country never, I am convinced, attain the horn dimensions of those of more open districts, and the same is the case with the buffalo. This bull stood 4 feet 1½ inch at the withers: the average height is 3 feet 11 inches or 4 feet, and of the cows 3 feet 9 inches.

If taken young, the blue wildebeeste is easily tamed; but as they grow older, they are apt to develop into unpleasant, if not actually dangerous, pets. They evince a decided dislike to a Kafir, and will charge and bowl them over in a most uncereemonious manner. I once caught a young one, a yearling, in a curious way on the Mjindana river. Having been shooting over the ground the day before, I had killed a fat cow, and on riding past the spot next day, we saw a young wildebeeste walking slowly along under some trees, near to one of which he stood and permitted us to ride up to him. As we had anticipated a run we had taken the riems from the horses' necks, and made running nooses in the ends of them to throw over the little fellow's head. To our surprise, however, as we rode up he did not even look round to see what was coming up behind him. We approached him up wind, and when within a few paces Muntumuni rode up on the other side to throw his noose. The wildebeeste forestalled him, however, and running quickly up to the horse, stood quietly alongside while the boy slipped the riem over its neck; but before I could get mine over, he must have winded us, or become frightened at the restraint, for he commenced to cut capers, and dragging the riem from the boy's

hands, rushed off. I quickly galloped alongside him, when he repeated the performance of running up to the horse, doubtless taking it for its mother, which was probably the cow killed the previous day. This time we succeeded in getting both riems over, one on each side, and thus led him easily to camp some two miles distant. I kept him for three days, and then let him go, as I had no milk to give him nearer than at the head camp, many miles distant. Otherwise I would have kept him altogether, as he was very quiet, and permitted me to handle him unreservedly. Whether he lived or not after being turned loose is hard to say, but he probably would do so, if not caught by lions, leopards, or wild-dogs: at all events, I saw him feeding in the vicinity of our camp on several subsequent occasions.



" *The fighting sable.*"

CHAPTER XV.

HUNTING THE SABLE ANTELOPE.

Frequent occurrence of sable antelope—Measurements—A grand head—Variation in shape of horns—Horn measurements—Habits of sable antelope—Their curiosity—Graceful motions—Shooting in thick bush difficult—A singular habit—Tenacity of life—Good country for sable—A savoury stew—Sameness of the country—Waterbuck—Matter-of-fact—Further confirmation—At last!—A warrior king—A dangerous opponent—Disappointment—*Billong*—The Boer's commissariat—"There, they're off!"—Two good hits—At the last spruit—Paradoxical—Another visit to the Rij Kopjes—Government pot-hunters—A well-remembered spot—Rover to the fore—Early intruders—Morning—A lovely view—Martial eagle—"Who scores?"—In luck's way—"Isn't he a daisy?"—Winchester repeaters—A lost chance—A leopard on the spoor—Hooked up—Charging back—Again on the spoor—Beaten—The bull found—Sable antelope and tsetse—A prize—Sable antelope with two calves—

Encounters between bulls—Silent witnesses—A duel to death—A fight for life—Revenged—A plucky attempt—A near thing—An amusing incident—"Look out, H——, look out!"—Not to be caught napping again—Farewell.

"ONE of the loveliest animals which graces this fair creation!" Such is Gordon Cumming's description of the sable antelope when first he met with it, and it expresses an opinion which he probably held to the last. And without hesitation I re-echo his enthusiastic words, for I consider the sable stands alone and without a rival amongst the antelopes, animals which for grace and beauty surpass all the other *feræ naturæ*. The koodoo is beyond question a magnificent creature, and his great spiral horns are justly held to be valuable trophies, but for my part I should never dream of comparing the two, beautiful as each is in its way.

The incidents connected with the death of my first sable bull, as of my first lion, are still fresh in my memory, and the recollection of them will long outlive most others. To the present moment the sight of a good old sable bull causes me to experience a thrill of enjoyment as keen almost as that with which I viewed my first, in the good days gone by. In most parts of the country of which I write, the sable antelope is by no means rare even at the present day; indeed there are places where it is particularly plentiful, being frequently seen in troops of from twelve or fifteen to thirty or more in number, though it is true that twelve years ago one could count ten for each one that will now be found.

A full-grown sable antelope bull stands from $13\frac{1}{2}$ to 14 hands at the shoulder, and a cow $12\frac{1}{2}$ hands. The longest pair of sable antelope bull horns I ever saw were secured by a Boer hunter during the season of 1891, to the west of the Libombo mountains. They were afterwards purchased by a friend of mine, Mr Harry Barber, and we together measured them very carefully over the anterior curve, and found them to be 46 inches. They were a very heavy, even pair, and, according to the Boer's statement, the tips had worn bare places on each of the bull's shoulders, but as I did not see the skin, I cannot certify to this. Forty inches and over is a good length for bull horns, and make a fine head; cow horns, 29 inches.

Sable horns vary a great deal in shape and general appearance,

some being closer set than others, flatter at the sides, with less bend ("*recht uit*," as the Boers say), and rising at a more acute angle from the frontal bone: such horns are usually very close at the tips, and are less common than wider-set horns. The following measurements of some sable bull horns, shot by myself, will explain my meaning better:—

Length over anterior curve.	In straight line from back of base to tip.	Tip to tip.
Inches.	Inches.	Inches.
45 $\frac{1}{8}$	27 $\frac{1}{4}$	14 $\frac{3}{4}$
44 $\frac{3}{8}$	28 $\frac{5}{8}$	14
40	25 $\frac{3}{8}$	15
42 $\frac{7}{8}$	32	4 $\frac{7}{8}$
43	33	5
41	32	8

Of cow horns I have secured three remarkably fine pairs, measuring 33, 33 $\frac{1}{2}$, and 35 $\frac{3}{8}$ inches respectively.

Malformations are rather common amongst sable horns. I have one pair the right horn of which is of normal shape, while the left forms a half circle under the lower jaw of the animal; and I have twice seen one or other horn starting out at right angles from the skull, its point directed downwards.

Sable antelope are gregarious, being found in troops varying in number from eight or ten to thirty or forty individuals. In such cases where large numbers are found together, they will be seen to consist almost entirely of cows and calves, with a few young bulls. There is never more than one full-grown old bull with a troop, though there may be half-a-dozen other well-grown bulls just entering their prime. It will, I think, be found, as in the case of eland, that the most watchful and suspicious animal in a troop is one of the cows, though the bulls also at times act as sentinels. Roan antelope, on the contrary, appear invariably to trust to their bulls for safety and to give the danger-signal. It is not an uncommon thing to find four or five full-grown bulls consorting together, especially during the summer months, when the cows are with young. It is much easier to approach them under these conditions than when cows are with the troop.

Like the koodoo, the sable antelope is equally at home in rough hilly districts, and in the bush-clad sand-belts of the Low Country; but there is no doubt that the sable far prefers high, open, rolling country, thinly wooded. In common with

wildebeeste, roan antelope, eland, and zebra, they however seem well able to adapt themselves to circumstances, and wherever the high, healthy, open districts have been occupied, and they have found themselves forced to quit, they have made their home in the more unhealthy and thickly-wooded bush-country.

The nature of the ground in these latter districts is such as to afford but little scope for any display of stalking skill on the part of the sportsman in pursuit of this grand animal. Provided the direction of the wind be carefully studied—and it is always very shifty in thick bush—an easy approach can be made under cover of grass, bushes, and trees, always supposing you make the game out before they have seen you. The sable is, I think, perhaps the least suspicious of all the larger antelopes, and in this can give his congener, the roan antelope, points.

Not that he is dull of either sight or hearing—those grand dark eyes of his will probably have been watching you long before you have made him out, standing motionless in the deep shade of some clump of trees; but, unfortunately for himself, curiosity is so deeply engrained in his nature that it at first overcomes all thoughts of self-preservation. Eve's failing was sheer indifference by comparison. I do not mean to say that acrobatic performances, such as lying on one's back and kicking the legs in the air, or flaunting a rag on a ramrod, will lure him to destruction—for methinks he who tried it would often go supperless to bed if his food supply depended upon his success in that line; but the sable will certainly permit a very close approach in bush-country, merely standing and gazing hard at the intruder, until the latter discloses his nature and business, too often with fatal results. If, however, they are taken by surprise during their noonday rest in thick cover or long grass, they will take to flight with a wild rush and with marvellous celerity.

Sable will often stand in precisely the same manner as koodoo, in or near a patch of bush, and so long as they imagine themselves unseen will allow one to pass very close, making off as soon as the danger is over. When once started, they run with very great speed, and can keep it up for a great distance; and I feel certain that either sable, wildebeeste, or sassaby could with ease run away from any mounted man, if they chose to exert themselves to do it. When running, the sable arches its neck,

and the effect produced by this action, which shows off the grandly-curved horns to perfection, combined with the generally graceful contour and rich colouring of the body, is not to be surpassed by anything the animal world can produce. If the country hunted will admit of the use of horses, first-rate sport can be obtained after sable. The game certainly gets a chance for its life, as good as it can expect in these days of modern breech-loaders; and the sportsman is called upon for the exercise of good horsemanship, cool quick judgment, and the use of straight powder. I have often heard surprise expressed that one can miss an animal as large as an ox, when once he has brought his horse up within fair range; and it is frequently said that such a result can be due only to great carelessness or bad shooting. The best horsemen and the best game-shots know well how mistaken an idea this is, and what a drag it is upon a man to gallop at speed through thick and perhaps thorny bush, carrying a rifle, which, though perhaps light in itself, very quickly becomes heavy, after a run or two—his attention all the time divided between the game, his horse, and his rifle. They know how tired the right arm will become from constantly raising it, with rifle in hand, to ward off low branches and clinging thorn-bushes; and how, when at last a chance offers for a shot, you pull in and jump to the ground, only to find that the game has turned suddenly and placed a network of trees and branches between itself and danger! One does not care always to lose the chance, poor as it is; so the shot is fired, and the white splinters flying from some thorn-tree just behind the game confirm one in his opinion, long since formed, that it is sometimes uncommonly hard to hit an animal under these circumstances. Although, as a rule, sable antelope run very straight and at a smooth gallop, especially over open country, yet if hard pressed in bush, they resort to most puzzling tactics, twisting and turning about through the trees in a manner that will defy the best shot to knock them over.

There is one very curious habit of sable antelope, which is perhaps deserving of mention—that of invariably standing on the other bank after crossing through a spruit, even when aware that they are being closely pursued. If there is a troop of them, it is a pretty sight to see them, taking their cue from their leader, fling up out of the spruit, and wheeling round broadside with

wonderful smartness and precision, as if into allotted places ; then pulling up short, every head on the instant turning round to gaze in the direction of the threatened danger. Naturally they will not stand in this manner if they have been chased any great distance, or if very hard pressed from the first. So long as they keep to the ridges, they can, and do, travel in a style that keeps the best horse doing all he knows to live with them ; but whenever they make for a stream or gully, the exercise of a little judgment makes an easy standing shot almost a certainty. They should not be pressed when they first turn down the slope : keep your horse well in hand, and be prepared to act smartly ; as they near the spruit, watch them closely,—as soon as the leaders disappear from sight, spurt up, and then as they file out on the other side, pull in and dismount. There is a something in their movements which, however, it is difficult to describe, that tells an experienced hand in a moment whether they intend to stand or not ; in fact it is the same with all animals—one becomes accustomed to their movements, and prepares himself accordingly, where a tyro would lose a chance. I do not think this peculiarity of the sable is merely a casual display of curiosity on the part of a few individuals, but a habit of the species.

Not only is this splendid antelope possessed of great endurance and speed, but he has, like the sassaby and wildebeeste, in perhaps only a slightly less degree, wonderful tenacity of life. The idea has often presented itself to my mind, how suggestive it is that these glorious creatures all seem so to cling to life,—to that life which must be, nay is, so sweet to them. The cruel bullet tears through their vitals,—they feel, they know, it means death,—but will they give in ? Ah, no ! not until their limbs positively refuse to carry them, or until their bright eyes are clouded with the death mist that forbids them to see which way to turn ! Give in of their own freewill ! They cannot, without a hard struggle, bid farewell to all that has made life dear,—to murmuring spruits, reed-fringed and cool ; to the quiet sheltered glades through which at morning and evening they have roamed, daintily plucking the grass knee-deep beneath them ; to the sandy bush-clad ridges, ever beautiful, whether clothed in the summer luxuriance of spear- and *tambuki*-grasses, sighing softly to the music of scent-laden breezes, or robed in emerald set with

wild flowers of a thousand hues! When the rainy season sets in, and wild tropical storms sweep over the land, bringing every trickling spruit down in boiling flood, well they know a hundred spots in the strips of dark wood, where, in kraals of Nature's own making, whose fences are tangled briars, springing thorn-trees, and fruit-laden '*matungulu*' bushes, they can find rest and shelter,—ay, and quiet too, save for the pealing thunder-crashes; for the roar of the many torrents reaches them but as the distant murmur of surf on a beach, softly subdued, through the screen of summer foliage, and the blustering wind can but moan plaintively through the bending tree-tops, scattering, as it passes, the pink and golden acacia blossoms in a fragrant shower over their dark hides. Small wonder, indeed, that life to them is sweet!

But come with me, reader, for a while, and you shall see him in his native haunts, and judge for yourself whether all that has been said, and all that could be said, in praise of this glorious creature, oversteps the limits of perfect truth. There, yonder where on the uncertain sky-line appears the dim blue outline of detached kopjes, dancing in the shimmering haze, we may reasonably expect to find our game. Roughish ground, with plenty of thick cover, shade, and water, and if there is a sable in the country, he should be near that spot. The ridge from which those kopjes rise is, as it were, the dividing line between the broken ground of the hill-country and the lowest flats; and not till our arrival there shall we see game in any numbers, though there are a few small and scattered troops of sable, wildebeeste, sassaby, Burchell's zebra, and waterbuck here and there higher up along the banks of the larger rivers. There are no giraffe to be found anywhere near there now, though but a few years ago they were plentiful; and during the season of 1886, in company with my friends the Glynns, we captured a young one there out of a troop, one about two years old; but it is a far cry now to the giraffe country. Three days' fair trekking brings us to our camping-ground, as we have not delayed upon the road too much; and having selected a good site, with water handy, we set about making everything snug for the short time we may wish to remain. By the time the rough cattle-kraal is constructed, and the canvas cribs hung up for our nags, our willing if somewhat inexperienced "cook-boy" summons us to dinner, the principal

feature of which is a large sauce-pan full of savoury stew, whose component parts are as numerous as tasty, fur and feather being both requisitioned for the occasion. Then, after a draw at our pipes and a "night-cap," we turn in early, ready for the day's work on the morrow.

Daylight; and after the inevitable early cup of coffee and rusks, we saddle-up, not omitting to put some frugal luncheon into our holsters, for we may need it before we return. After getting through the belt of thick bush close to the camp, we strike out across a comparatively open ridge, and then down towards a stream on the other side of it. And, by the way, what great sameness there is about these ridges, one after another, as we cross them: there seems positively nothing whatever to guide one; and never do they appear more annoyingly alike than when one has lost his camp and the sun is setting! The stream ahead of us is of fair size, so we may as well ride along the bank a little up wind. Evidently there is game about, for see, there goes a little troop of young koodoo, lazily hopping off,

"To seek their dams upon the misty mount!"

And as they cross the stream, and run through the thick scrub on the bank, a large, heavily-built animal, making noise enough for a troop, trots out into a small open space, quite unaware of the cause of the disturbance, but knowing instinctively that the koodoo have run from danger. The gracefully forward-curving, annulated horns, and rough donkey-like hide, dun-coloured, proclaim him a waterbuck bull, even if we did not see the curious elliptical brand on his stern, whereby he has earned from the matter-of-fact Boers the anything but poetical name of *kring-gat*. But there is not much poetry in the natures of these sturdy sons of the soil; truly with them "a spade is a spade"!

Uncertainly stands the old bull for a moment or two, then trots on again a few paces, and stands a second time, half-facing in our direction. Glancing an instant over his shoulder, four or five clumsy, big-eared cows run out, and all stand gazing at us till we are abreast of them, then whisking their ridiculous tails, start off at a heavy trot, and disappear in the bush. If we still doubt the fact of their being waterbuck, we only need to cross the stream — half an hour later would do — and our olfactory

nerves would at once enlighten us upon the subject, for they smell very high. Ha, at last! Behind yon patch of thick cover about 100 yards from the bank, I fancy I saw something move! Just hold on a second till I get my glasses; that dark-looking object is suspiciously like a sable. And it *is*, too, sure enough. Come, ride on quietly; now we are nearly abreast of them. A rush, a clatter of horns and hoofs, and out they burst—two, three, four, seven in all—an old bull, a half-grown one, and five cows. So, now, hold on, they won't go far. See, even now the old bull wheels round, and stands broadside, with his proud head raised, gazing at us; walks a few paces nearer, and again stands, the warrior-king of the antelopes confest! The remainder of the little troop range up, standing *en echelon* upon the other side of him. Perfect beings are they in every respect, with clean, shapely, muscular limbs, high powerful withers, and low quarters; small exquisitely shaped heads, well set on powerful necks, and surmounted with long scimitar horns, very rugged, and deeply annulated, and in the old bull sweeping back well over the shoulders, and all of 41 inches in length. And what bold contrasts of colour! The cows, carrying smaller and less curved horns than the bulls, are lovely creatures, with their rich dark chestnut hides, across which the stray sunbeams dance, their dark hog-manes and white bellies; while their lord is robed in glossiest sable, with a warm ruddy tint in the moving lights, his under parts white as falling snow, and his face beautifully marked with black, white, and many shades of brown. The dark amber-shaded eyes are as those of the giraffe, none more beautiful, and the sharply pointed, black-tipped ears give to the whole a high-bred look, such as no other antelope can boast of.

But he evidently thinks we have admired him enough, and, snorting defiantly, he wheels round and dashes off up the ridge, followed closely by the rest of the troop. Now, is he not a noble creature? Has he no claim, in his own right, to some protection from utter extinction? Perhaps he lacks the stately grace of the koodoo in a large measure, for his charms are of a bolder sort; his every motion betrays restlessness and energy of action. That same splendid antelope becomes transformed into a very demon when brought to bay: standing with forefeet firmly planted, or dropping upon his knees, with mane erect, the beauti-

ful eyes, once so softly luminous, now ablaze with fury, and his points lowered—woe betide the too-rash dogs that would fling themselves upon him! With motions so swift that the eye can scarce follow them, those terrible weapons cut through the air with a sound distinctly audible at a distance of several yards. The dauntless fighting spirit within gives strength to the muscles of the great neck, and larger, fiercer foes than dogs may well think twice before facing a sable antelope at bay, for the mighty lion has before now fallen a victim, pierced through and through with the double points!

But there is just a shade of disappointment, friend, in your looks, that we did not add those splendid horns to our trophies; but never mind, surely we are well rewarded by the pleasure he afforded us in permitting so close an examination. And we lose nothing, in fact we gain all, by sparing his life. The consciousness that we can look on so glorious a creature, and let him go off unharmed to his beloved forest home, makes us feel all the better and truer sportsmen. Besides, we are sure to get another chance some time to-day, and then you'll have a turn. . . . Riding is pretty warm work now, though, both for our nags and ourselves, for the sun is climbing rapidly. The sable are now on the higher ridges, thinking of settling down in some thick shade till after 3 P.M., when they will be out to feed again. . . . Mid-day now by the sun, so we must off-saddle and let our horses get a roll, while we examine the contents of our holsters. Ah, a few rusks apiece, and a couple of strips of, what did you say—old leather? By no means. That is *biltong*, the Boer's *mulum in parvo*, and almost his entire commissariat in the hunting-veldt or *on commando*. No straggling heavily-laden trains of commissariat waggons, with the ever-present fear for their safety, does he require to follow him about the country; he is here to-day, and fifty miles away to-morrow, carrying his supplies in his coat-pocket or holsters!

A pull at the flask, containing Usher's, strongly diluted, a few draws at the pipe, and we shall do till evening. Come, now, let's saddle-up,—the nags had an easy morning. We'll take that other side of the ridge returning; the grass is not burnt, and there appears to be some decent cover upon it, so we should certainly drop across sable before long. We must cross the creek here, though, the banks seem high above,—here's a good place!

Boggy? No, I don't think so; no—all right, follow in my spoor. We must keep a little more northerly, or the wind will play us tricks,—it is always treacherous in such close country. Anyway, sable have been about here lately: they seem to have fed up this ridge during the morning, coming from the direction of the one we just crossed. Look at that bush there, freshly broken down, and the bark rubbed off; that is the work of some sable bull, and a good one too, to judge by his spoor. It's pretty thick here, though, rather an awkward place if we do put them—— Gad! I thought so,—there, they're off! Crash! crash! to front and right, they make lots of noise in this dry underwood, but so confoundedly thick is it, nothing can be seen but an occasional black patch and a glimpse of fine horns. There must surely be bulls amongst them, but it's hard yet awhile to tell what the mischief there is, as they twist and turn about through the matted scrub and thickly-growing trees. We must get them out in more open ground first; but sit close, and take care not to differ in opinion with your nag as to the best side of a tree or thorn-bush to race, or there'll surely be a spill. Ant-bear holes? Just a few, but they don't signify; watch the game, harden your heart, and trust to your horse and good luck! Hullo! they've split up; so come, we'll hold after this lot, a dozen cows and a couple of good bulls. Ha! clear at last; how splendid they look as they file out of the bush on to more open ground, and running smoothly and well! Now, give your nag his head, and push them, and jump down smartly in the open. Wo-ho, boy, steady! Now's the chance. Crack! crack! crack! That was well done,—none down, but two good hits, two distinct "clops." Up and after them again. Better going now, and we can let out; but we must do our level best, our nags are none too fast. Try another shot now—it's rather thick though; crack!—ping-ng! Well missed—you couldn't have hit yon sapling if you'd tried! Never mind, they're ours as soon as we get a bit of good ground, if we only stick to them now. Now's the chance; see, our two bulls turn out, the pace is too fast for them, for they are each badly hit. Still through another half mile of not exactly thick but close bush, then again on to open ground. A spruit in front of us, and there we have them; but we must push our nags for the next couple of hundred yards, though keeping them well in hand.

There they go across, and up the other bank; they'll stand now, barely 120 yards. Steady! Round comes the one bull, broad-side on; the other poor fellow is too sick,—he has crossed his last spruit,—he no longer carries his head proudly, but hangs it low, trailing his blood-smeared muzzle through the grass-tops, as he walks slowly forward, swishing his tail from side to side. Twice more the rifles ring out,—the one bull drops dead, the other falls, but struggles again to his knees, then rolls over and dies. Hurrah!—now we can examine them at our leisure; but—ah! that “but”—the glorious eyes are glazed now, white with the death-film; the symmetrical limbs are limp, and powerless ever again to carry those bulls through the sunlit forest, or over the misty plains; their life's-blood dyes scarlet the crisp, yellow grass beneath them. The sun still shines as brilliantly as ever, but these two gallant sable have seen it set and rise for the last time!

Yes, the trophies are ours; but what price have we paid for them? Did their owners deserve such a fate? I'm an old stager now at the game, friend, but I'm not ashamed to say that could I but give those two lives back I would gladly do so. “Man wants but little here below,” yet methinks even that little is far too much when the taking of the lives of such creatures is his pleasure. Such thoughts will intrude, do what we may to silence them, and yet to-morrow—ah, well, “least said soonest mended.” We are paradoxical creatures anyhow. Come, we must off-saddle and give the horses a blow while we cover the sable up, else there will be little left by to-morrow. We cannot ride them in this afternoon, and it's high time we were getting back to camp.

I once came very near, as I believe, witnessing a most interesting scene—the attack of a leopard upon a sable antelope bull which I had wounded. I should altogether question whether any leopard would ever attempt such a thing upon an unwounded full-grown bull; and as in this case the attack was not actually made, I am unable to say for certain that such was the leopard's intention, but it certainly looked very like it. It was in the month of October 1888 that I started to spend a few days on the flats lying to the south of the Rij Kopjes, a district of which I have made previous mention. It is a well-watered piece of country, and covered almost along its whole extent with heavy

bush, which up to as late as two years ago was a favourite resort of sable antelope, koodoo, and a great variety of smaller game. Now all that is changed. The Selati railway is being pushed through the country, and such animals as may have escaped the Government pot-hunters have cleared away to safer haunts.

At the last moment I was joined by a young friend who was to accompany me upon my next trip to the hunting-country, and who took this opportunity of trying his hand at African game. Thus, late one afternoon, after an easy two-and-a-half-hours' ride from my house, we camped on the bank of one of the numerous creeks which intersect the country around the kopjes in all directions—the same spot upon which I spent a very cold and miserable night in January 1892. It was a favourite camping-ground of mine, partly on account of its seclusion, and also for its natural beauties, and its near vicinity to the choicest spots for game. We took a cart down with us, and ten boys in addition to the driver and leader, and pitched our camp in a perfect little arbour of blossoming *'mngcosi* and *'mganu* trees, whose branches had oftentimes done duty for my larder upon previous similar trips. The sail was dropped over the cart and triced up on one side to the overhanging boughs, thus affording much-needed shelter from the terrific rays of the sun and the unhealthy dews of night; while the boys cut grass and ran up a shelter for themselves a little distance away. As it was late by the time we were properly fixed up, we did not go far that evening, merely contenting ourselves with a stroll round the base of one of the kopjes, where my dog Rover succeeded in catching an old klipspringer ram, though how he did it is a mystery, and best known to himself. As we were returning to the cart, we nearly kicked up a duiker ram, which gave an easy shot as he ran out on the opposite side of a little hollow, and I knocked him over. After getting outside of a substantial dinner—one of those wonderful triumphs of the culinary art only to be seen in a hunter's camp—and discussing a pipe as an accompaniment to a glass of whisky-and-water, we turned in somewhat early, to enable us to get away in time next day.

We were up betimes on the following morning, and having made a modest breakfast, and seen our nags fed and cleaned

down, we set out on foot about an hour before sun-up, and climbed one of the numerous peaks of the long line of kopjes at a spot well known to me as affording a specially good look-out. It was a spot whence, many a time and oft, I have marked down a noble troop of sable sauntering listlessly through the open glades, and have watched the stately koodoo leaving its feeding-grounds, and slowly, warily making its way to the deep forest or rocky bush-clad spurs.

We had to force our way upward through a tangle of bush heavily laden with the night's dew, which drenched us to the skin. Now and then a startled klipspringer would jump up at our feet, and, with lowered head, dash off through the under-wood, then bound up the hillside lightly as a fairy, halting a moment on some projecting rock to turn its round inquisitive little head and gaze back at us, as if to inquire who thus presumed to make so early and unceremonious an entry upon its domains. Great fierce baboons boomed out their challenge from unseen crags, sounding a key-note which their shrill-voiced progeny vainly strove to pick up.

At last we reached the great flat crown of rock which forms the summit, and standing our rifles against a bush which struggles out from its stony surroundings, we compose ourselves to spy out the land at our leisure. This is at first a somewhat difficult matter, owing to the heavy mists which curl in white masses over the well-wooded creeks, and hide everything from our view. But yet there is ample scope for admiration, and while my more prosaic companion lay down to "wait till it cleared up a bit," I gave myself up to the enjoyment of the hour, and, through the filmy wreaths of smoke ascending from my pipe, gazed delightedly at the, to me, ever entrancing scene. I always think the charms of early morning far outnumber those of evening. I scarcely know *why* it is so; surely rest is sweet to all, from king to peasant! To sit down in the soft drowsy stillness of a summer's evening, while yet daylight lingers golden in the western sky, and the great pulse of Nature throbs more calmly than in the busy day,—to sit thus and say, "My work is done; rest is at hand for brain and muscle,"—is sweet beyond measure, even to the most energetic. But who, in the full enjoyment of health and strength, shall say that the call to be up

and doing does not strike a deeper chord, rouse all one's energies, send the blood coursing quicker through the veins, even as

"The trumpet-blast that cries to them
To charge the Volscian home"

stirred the hearts of the Roman legions "in the brave days of old"?

The very idea of reawakening to the glorious uncertainties of the day rouses all our latent fire, our spirits rise, and we feel equal to anything and everything that the day may bring forth. The keen fresh air of early morning braces one's nerves and imparts new life to us. Everything around is waking, the very air throbs with music—the music of unseen myriads, chanting a pæan of rejoicing for another day that has come! The evening must always have a ring of sadness in its happiest moments,—the thought "it is past" must ever intrude,—but in the flush of early morn who thinks of the past? We say, "It lies before us,—it is to come!"

Say, reader, could you look out upon the scene that lay before us that morning and not feel as I did—how well life is worth living, how fair our world is for all its many dark spots, how invaluable are the gifts of health and strength?

See now! Before the gently rising wind the mist-clouds break and curl up, scatter into thousand wreaths of transparent vapour, and vanish. Looking eastward, the eye travels over a limitless expanse of bush - veldt, still lying in shadow, which stretches away towards the big-game country, the Libombo and the sea. It all looks so cool and quiet at the great distance, the quiet of expectancy, as Nature awaits the coming of the great light-giver to break forth once more into exuberant life. Southward, across very broken country whose inequalities distance and lingering wisps of snowy vapour tone down, we see a broken mountainous region across the Sabi river, the solitary Rhenoster Kopjes, dark Buffel's Kop, the quaint Manungu, and the weird Ship Mountain; while yet beyond these lies the dark range of the mountains of Swaziland, clear cut against the steel-blue sky. Looking round, through west to north-north-west and north, a great chain of hills and mountains borders our view. But who shall describe the ever-changing, ever-new beauties of that

mountain-chain? None, I trow, for from the loftiest crags, the highest peaks, glittering golden in the sun's first rays, to the darkest, blackest depths of untrodden kloofs, we see effects which words cannot portray, for they are indescribable. Softest blendings of the rainbow's every hue, shapes weird and fantastic, precipitous krantzies, lichen-covered and water-worn, tiny plateaux clothed in soft green grass and snowy blossoming sugar-bush, from which cool bubbling rills trickle forth, and with merry chatter gambol down the mountain-side, now glinting in the early sunlight as they tumble in miniature cascades over the grey granite boulders, scattering their welcome spray-showers over the soft moss-grass and trembling ferns, now lost to sight in some dense silent bush—

“From beneath
Whose thick mysterious boughs in the dark morn
The panther's roar comes muffled”—

again bursting into view, gathering strength as they go, till they take a final leap over the lower bush-crowned buttresses on to the flats below, and join the larger streams, ever hurrying onwards, by deep still pools, where crocodiles and seacow disport themselves, and the gaunt lion quenches his thirst after his night of carnage—

“By the wild deer's haunt and the buffalo's glen”—

onward towards the sea!

Great stretches of bush, blocking the entrances to innumerable dark, noisome, and, for the most part, unexplored caves, into the larger and more accessible of which the former inhabitants of this land fled for refuge from the devastating hordes of 'Mzilagazi and 'Mswazi, and backed by rough grey crags, the home of the quaint coney and that mountain satyr—the chacma baboon; deep boulder-strewn kloofs where even the fiercest, most searching rays of the summer sun never enter; undulating foothills, rocky spurs, and bold peaks,—all combine to form a picture grandly beautiful and imposing beyond measure.

Suddenly a wild shrill scream arrests our attention; we look up, and there, borne upwards and onwards in ever widening circles, upon wings that never tire, sails a noble Martial eagle, screaming his note of defiance to night and darkness, exulting in

his glorious powers of flight, and nerving us to emulate him in his welcome to the risen sun. "But," says my matter-of-fact American friend at last, "you came out this morning to look for sable antelope, not to stare at scenery. Hanged if I don't believe a troop of them might pass you within a rifle-shot unnoticed, while you are expatiating upon a view which you can admire any other day!"

"Kahle!" as the natives say, "not so fast, my eager friend. Who do you think scores,—he who finds his pleasure in sport alone, in the mere stalking or chasing game, and the final losing or killing; or he who can cull real enjoyment from other sources as well, as keen as yourself at the actual sport, and loving all the surroundings more? You only see in yonder sable a creature to be hunted and perhaps killed; after death a trophy, and so many hundredweight of good or indifferent meat! When you know him better you will love him as I do, not alone for the sport he affords and the trophies he carries, but because he is a beautiful work of nature, and because I know and can follow his life-history from the time when, as a little long-legged chestnut calf, he followed his proud mother to and from the feeding-grounds, until the present, when, in all the glory of sable hide and massive horns, he heads his own troop, and counts his own chestnut calves by the score! Those kloofs and dongas, hills and streams, which to you are but so many obstacles to be overcome in approaching the game, or annoying hindrances to a clear view of the country, are to me pictures in nature's ever-open, ever-beautiful book, out of which the weakest intellects may learn something, the most careless student find matter of absorbing interest. And you think that, attention thus arrested, the instincts of the sportsman take second place? Allow me to tell— Ha! now for the proof. I can admire scenery, argue with you, and mark game at the same time. Just hand me your glasses a minute. If that was not one of our oxen I saw then—and I don't fancy it was, for it is too far from camp—it was a solitary old sable, the very thing we are looking for. Do you see, just across the creek there, in that patch of bush at the edge of the open green spot, beyond that large white stone, and a little this side of yon old dead tree? Ah! now I have him; it's a sable, sure enough! We're in luck's way, too, for a better piece of stalking-ground I never saw, and

there's no occasion to risk giving him our wind by going down to the camp for the horses. We'll get down into that little dry sluit and follow it down to the main creek ; it will bring us out nearly abreast and below wind of the sable."

My companion, who now saw a sable antelope for the first time, was eager enough, and we lost not a moment in clambering down from the kopje. The little dry gully was easily and quickly reached, as the bush was so thick there was scarcely any need for further concealment, and from a piece of rising ground we took another look at the unconscious sable, which was now feeding on the very edge of the bush, and moving slowly towards us. "My, isn't he a daisy!" ejaculated my eager friend, as he levelled the glasses on the game; and I scarcely ever see a solitary sable bull now but I recall with a smile his quaint expression of admiration. And he certainly was a most magnificent beast, one of the largest I have ever seen before or since, and carried a grand head, worth any trouble to secure.

A few minutes later we were making our way up the main creek, keeping well under the bank, till we reached the large rock which I had marked from the kopje above. Here I took a very careful survey of the ground, and found that we were completely hidden from the sable by a thick round clump of evergreen bush; and though I could not see him, I knew that he must still be behind this, as our approach had been so easy we could not possibly have given him the alarm. There was a small clump of low thorn-trees about 40 yards from the bank, which I believed we could reach under cover of the bush behind which the sable was feeding. We succeeded perfectly, and then, removing my hat, and wriggling along lizard-fashion through the low grass, I advanced another ten yards or so to the left of the thorn-trees, till I caught sight of the sable, about 150 yards distant, still feeding, though now slowly moving away, and appearing just a little uneasy, as though inwardly suspicious of some possible danger, yet unable to locate it. The view I had of him confirmed me in my opinion as to his size, and I felt that a new hand seldom gets such a grand chance at his first essay. But there was no time to lose, the camp was close by, and at any moment the leader might come wandering along looking for his oxen, or the horses approach too closely

and start the bull off. So I crept back to my companion, as I had given him the first shot, and strongly urged him to take it from where I had seen the sable; but he was excited, and mistrusted the range, and besides that, he was already commencing to lose faith in his rifle, one of those most unsportsmanlike weapons, an 1886 model Winchester repeater, with a front-sight like a church-steeple. I offered him my Metford, but he thought, as he had never used it, he might do worse with it; so he decided to try and creep nearer under cover of the evergreen bush. I cautioned him not to attempt a nearer approach than another 50 yards, as I felt sure he would make a "hash" of it if he did. I promised to wait for him to take the shot, unless I saw the sable making off before he could fire. Away he went, doing very well, for an amateur, in the creeping line; but he had not gone many yards when the sable walked forward into full view from the place where I was kneeling down, and stood looking half-back in the direction of the bush from which he had first emerged. My friend was still creeping on, so I gave a low "St!" to try and attract his attention, but I expect his heart was thumping too hard for him to hear other sounds. Next moment the sable wheeled round and stood gazing hard at the clump of bush behind which my friend was advancing, still fondly imagining himself unseen. I could easily have dropped the sable dead where he stood, for he had never once looked towards the little bush behind which I knelt; and it would have been better for him, poor brute, had I done so,—it would have saved him many hours of agony and a lingering death.

A loud snort, a whisk of the tail, the great neck is arched, his points brought well forward, and like an arrow the superb old fellow darts off up the ridge. He passed me at about 140 yards, and taking well forward, I fired. The bull dropped as if struck by lightning, and I knew I had held too far in front, but he was on his legs again in an instant and away. Jamming in another cartridge, I fired again just as he was disappearing over the ridge, and the bullet again clopped loudly. Off I started, not waiting to look for my companion, and without even time to wonder what the mischief he had been about that he did not fire when the bull was recovering himself after my first shot, but on top-

ping the ridge could see no sign of the sable. Soon afterwards M—— joined me, and we took up the blood-spoor together. Suffice it to say we followed on it for quite four miles, but without sighting the sable again; indeed from first to last he had not pulled up, but maintained his rapid gallop onwards as far as we followed. My companion was keenly disappointed, of course, and I felt thoroughly disgusted with the whole performance, for I certainly ought never to have let that sable get away; but, as he was far too good a beast to lose without making an effort to find him, we returned to camp for our horses and some boys to take the spoor. Towards mid-day, with our reinforcements, we reached the spot where M—— and I had given up the spoor in the morning, and about a mile beyond that it led us on to some burnt ground, over which we had scarcely proceeded 200 yards when, to our astonishment, we saw the spoor of a large leopard following on that of the sable. The leopard had run along the spoor for perhaps 100 yards, but had then slowed down to a trot, keeping exactly in the tracks of the bull. "Now for a little excitement," I thought; and when at last we took both spoors to the edge of a rather extensive bush I felt sure we were about to become eyewitnesses to one of nature's dramas, and to obtain proof that on occasions a leopard will tackle even so powerful an animal as a sable antelope bull. Unfortunately we were ourselves probably the means of preventing so interesting an encounter, for we must have been on the very heels of the leopard, and but for the low bush scattered about, I feel sure we should have seen it as we came along on the spoor. Had we halted then even, and given the leopard ten minutes' grace—as I have ever since regretted not doing—the chances would have been greatly in favour of our bagging both animals. I advised M—— to skirt the bush on the far side and to post himself where he could command a good view, while I got the boys together in line, riding in the centre myself, and in this formation entered the bush. It proved thicker than I had imagined, and 20 yards in I got hooked up, advance and retreat seeming equally impossible; so I dismounted, and leaving my horse, crept along on foot. In the meanwhile, most unfortunately the boys on the right flank, finding the bush less dense where they were, advanced too quickly, and suddenly came upon "Spots" crouching under a

low bank. He dashed out at once, with short sullen grunts, and charged back through the line; then turning short, he passed along close in front of me. I heard the rustling of the bushes, but for the life of me could not get a glimpse of his spotted hide. At the same instant the sable must have broken cover lower down, for I heard three shots from my American friend's rifle, fired as rapidly and wildly as only a repeating-rifle can perform. Only those who know the excitability of the African native can judge fairly of the commotion that followed.

There was but one course open to me—to return to my horse and endeavour to get him and myself out of that infernal bush to a place where it would be possible to see somewhat farther than 5 yards on either side. Once in the saddle, I kept over in the direction of the shots, and soon got into thinner bush on the edge of a little shallow donga, over which my horse jumped. A few moments later, one of the boys following in my spoor came on the leopard lying close amongst some stones in the donga, and within a few yards of where I had passed, whence it again made off. In the meantime I got clear of the bush, and caught sight of M—— galloping away down creek, followed at a distance by most of the boys. The sable had gone clean away! M—— said he had a good chance as it broke cover at less than 100 yards from him; and he had “pumped” three shots at it, the only result of which appeared to have been to send the sable away harder than ever. He was particularly disgusted with the rifle, and came to the same conclusion that every American sportsman I have met out here has done—that it is not a suitable weapon. Loud in its praise at first, they are equally loud in its condemnation at the last.

It was useless to return and look for the leopard, so we again took up the sable's spoor. Poor brute! he had run round in a great circle and returned to the line of kopjes almost at the identical spot where we first saw him that morning. But we lost the spoor at last in some rough stony ground amongst long grass and bush, and, as it was getting dusk, we gave it up and returned to camp. A week later a Kafir living at a kraal close by found the remains of a sable bull in a patch of thick bush near to this spot—in fact, from his description of the place, less than 300 yards from where we lost the spoor. He

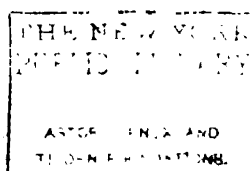
brought me the horns, which measured 43 inches over the anterior curve; and I have no doubt but that they were the horns of the bull we had followed so far, and given up when so close to the spot where it lay down to die. My first bullet must have hit it in the neck—I held too far forward; the second, a three-quarter shot from behind, apparently passed through one of its lungs, judging from the colour and nature of the blood.

Late one afternoon during the season of 1891 I had shot a giraffe after a good spin, and having covered it up for the night, returned to camp; and on the following morning I took the small waggon and some boys to ride it in, as it was a very fat cow. After the waggon had left on its return journey, I set out with my after-rider to look for game, and while descending a long slope into an extensive hollow, we caught sight of a troop of dark-coloured animals standing in some thick bush on the opposite ridge. We took them for wildebeeste, and not wishing to shoot at them, rode towards them to see how near they would permit us to approach; but when within 150 yards of them they jumped away, and we saw, to our surprise, that it was a troop of about twenty-five sable antelope. During four years' hunting in and about that vicinity I had never seen a sable, or even the spoor of one, on any of those ridges, and I had always been at a loss to account for the fact, seeing that there were numbers of them just across the river, only eight miles distant in a westerly direction. The vegetation seemed precisely similar, but whether the occasional presence of the tsetse-fly on this side and not on the other had anything to do with it, I cannot say. It is certain that sable antelope, like eland, shun the fly-country if they possibly can; and as during this season the fly had retired in an easterly direction across the Vimbangwenya, and sable were fairly plentiful, it is just possible that this may account for their appearance.

We were away after them at once, my good nag being most eager that day for a run; and he had it too, for the sable went straight and hard. I dismounted three times, but my rifle missed fire on each occasion, owing to the striker being too short; and only a few days later it nearly got me into a scrape with a leopard in some thick bush. At last I got a good chance, as they turned up an open ridge and filed past me about 170



"The sable went straight and hard."



yards distant. I took the leader, as it appeared by far the largest of the troop, and it dropped to one shot. On riding up I found I had indeed secured a prize, because, though a cow, she was quite the finest I have ever seen or shot, with a splendid pair of perfect horns, 35½ inches in length—a record pair. She was in the pink of condition, and her black glossy hide was as dark as any bull's, and quite unlike the usual rich chestnut colour of most cows.

A few days before the incident above related occurred, I saw what was certainly a curiosity—a sable antelope cow with two calves. There were no other sable near. The cow ran out of a thick patch of bush, and when less than 100 yards distant stood and looked back. As I rode closer to the bush the two calves ran out of it and joined their mother, when all three stood watching me. The beautiful creature seemed to know it was not in danger, for as I rode past, heading a little away from her, she stooped her head and commenced licking one of the calves along the back, much as cattle do. The calves were perhaps about five months old.

Sable antelope bulls fight most fiercely amongst themselves, and though I have never actually witnessed an encounter between them, have often seen the results of such, evidenced by great gaping wounds that could have been made by nothing else than the horns of an opponent. I once killed a large bull on the banks of the Mehlamahali, with a piece of another's horn-tip fully 3 inches long buried in its neck. How it had become thus broken I cannot surmise, as it is scarcely possible that it could have found resistance enough in the neck to break it off.

In 1889 I shot an old bull on the Swinya with a terrible wound in its off-shoulder, caused by a horn-thrust from another. The flesh of the shoulder and half-way along the ribs on that side was quite uneatable, and was refused even by Basuto natives, and they do not stop at a trifle. I doubt if this bull would have recovered, although when put up he ran well and strongly, and showed no signs of pain or weakness.

During the previous season I found the dry carcass of a patriarchal bull lying in some buffalo-grass near a river-bank. One horn only, a particularly fine one, was attached to the skull; probably jackals had carried off the other. Whilst hunting about in the grass for it, I noticed mingling with the sable hairs

of the antelope the long tawny mane-hair of a lion, and shortly afterwards discovered the dry carcass and skull of what had evidently been a fine specimen. It lay quite close to the sable, but under a little clump of very thick bush, hence I had previously overlooked it.

It was a clear case of a duel to the death, and standing there looking upon the unsightly remains, it needed but little exercise of imagination to witness that last death-struggle. Unseen myself, I can watch that noble troop of antelope as they lay late one afternoon of early autumn in yonder patch of long, dry, rustling grass, just across the Swinya river, sheltered from the fitful gusts of wind by a tangled hedge of "wait-a-bit" thorns. They lie scattered about amongst the thorn-trees till the setting sun proclaims their grazing-time. One by one they rise, stretching themselves lazily, and rubbing their gnarled horns against the tree-stems. Last to move, the great dark form of an old bull looms through the tangle of bushes. The very last rays of the sun, as it sinks behind a murky cloud-bank, glisten and linger lovingly upon his sleek hide and boldly-curved rugged horns. He turns half round, gazing intently. What is it that thus rivets his attention? Is it the great troop of which he is the acknowledged leader, or perchance the golden-fringed cloud-bank in the west, as some foreboding comes over him of the terrible fate awaiting him to-night? That set look is as of one consciously gazing on some familiar object for the last time! But he gives no sign: retaining all his proud dignity, he steps indolently out from the bush, and follows his scattered troop as it advances, grazing, towards the river-bank. For two hours they apply themselves to their important task, during which time they have scattered considerably, some feeding up, some down, the course of the river; others stand on the cool white sand, daintily clipping the softest shoots of the luxuriant buffalo-grass from the bank above; two or three small parties gather round the water-holes, quenching their thirst before entering more seriously upon the business of the night. A gusty wind is still blowing, and slight drifting showers of rain pass over. The sky is clouded, though the young moon occasionally glances through, her silver crescent appearing hazy and indistinct behind the misty veil. The old sable bull still keeps somewhat apart

from the troop, feeding at intervals, but in an uneasy, unsettled manner. There is danger abroad, and instinctively he knows it, though unable to tell from which quarter it threatens. Keenly he peers before him into the darkness, and his expanded nostrils suspiciously seek for some taint in the air. He is standing on the farther side of the river, at the very edge of the bank, statuesquely beautiful, doubtful but fearless; like Mazeppa's steed,

"The speed of thought is in his limbs,"

though now his whole attitude betokens quiet eager watchfulness.

Suddenly rises on the silence of the night a wild weird cry, ending in a shriek as of a tortured demon; then stillness, and again the cry is repeated. The old bull glances round at his followers, and sees the heifers and young calves closing up in frightened haste as the ominous sound reaches them. Then he steps forward a few paces, and just on the edge of a strip of bush skirting the river appear before him the rough gaunt forms of two hyænas, slouching along with lowered heads and rustling footfall, searching for an easier gained meal than the calf of a fighting sable. Another discordant howl from the pair as they vanish like evil spirits in the gloom is answered by a defiant snort from the old bull, who now seems relieved, and applies himself with greater eagerness to his supper, the majority of the troop having now joined him on the bank. False security, my gallant sable! Your eyes, bright as they are, cannot pierce the misty darkness; your keen scent can but warn you of danger above wind! And so that long lithe shape, advancing silently, stealthily, from a thorn thicket far down the river, has at present no terrors for you!

No need to ask what it is. In a faint gleam of moonlight I can see the massive shoulders, the rough tawny mane waving in the night wind save where clinging burrs hold it fast in a tangled mass, the twitching tufted tail, the great broad head, the flashing opal eyes, the half-depressed ears, and the snarling lips just opened wide enough to show a white gleam of cruel fangs! The grim desert-chief is on the war-path, and neither unwearied vigilance, matchless speed, nor courage and endurance shall avail whom he has marked for his prey! Reaching the bank, with instinctive caution he sniffs about in the long grass; then stand-

ing motionless, save for a nervous quivering of the tail, the round ears no longer depressed, but thrown forward to catch every sound, with gleaming eyes he peers into the darkness. He hears the hyænas' wail, and then the snort of the defiant sable, while at the same moment a gust of the tell-tale wind brings proof positive that he is on the right track. Again the ears are flattened, the head lowered to the line of the back, as with a single bound he alights on the sandy river-bed. He is king in his own domain, and knowing every bend of the river well, his plans are quickly made. Creeping up under the bank on the opposite side of the river, where the great tree-ferns and other matted shrubs afford him welcome cover, he swiftly but silently lessens the distance that separates him from the wary antelopes. Will nothing warn that noble bull of the danger so surely approaching? Ever so slight a sign, and with arched necks and flying hoofs the herd would bid their foe defiance, and leave a hungry lion behind them! Nearer and nearer, till even faint sounds are audible from the grazing troop. Lower and lower crouches the lion, till his belly trails the sand, and the movement of his great limbs as he creeps on is scarcely perceptible. Just in front of him a giant fig-tree stands near the bank; the summer floods have swirled and eddied around the clustered roots, and great slices of the bank have been torn down. Here he leaves the river-bed, and creeping snake-like up amongst the roots, gains the shelter of the thick buffalo-grass which lines the bank.

A few paces more and the baleful eyes are fixed on the grazing troop. Flat on the head, buried in the rough mane, the ears are now pressed down: sound there is none; movement, except in the ever twitching tail, none; just the tips of the yellow claws protrude from their sheaths, great slimy drops of saliva hang from the black jowl and trickle over the massive forepaws, on which the head is lowered. The old bull is feeding amongst a lot of cows; he knows of no cause for alarm, though now and again he raises his shapely head, and all his keen senses test the security of his position. Then the few cows linger behind a little; he advances, and turns off slightly towards the river-bank, and—his fate is sealed! Scarcely twenty paces from him, the grim watcher slightly raises himself, a few short quick jerks of

the tail, and with slightly parted lips and flattened ears, but still silent as the grave, he rushes out, and the next moment is on the brawny shoulders of the old bull. One cannot expect an antelope to fight a lion, and yet it does seem hard that out of that great troop not one should fly to the help of their gallant leader. Rushing wildly hither and hither, an utter panic seizes all, but



"His fate is sealed."

they quickly rally and in mad fright dash off. Through dongas and water-courses, thorn thickets and open bush, they scour at speed, till

" Their thundering hoofs around
Wake the dark echoes of the trembling ground."

Nor do they pause till many a grassy ridge lies between them and the spot where they left their noblest battling for his life.

But what hope can he have ? One mighty bound, and a quick rush forward in his endeavour to rid himself of his terrible foe, and trembling he comes to a standstill. The white fangs are

buried in his quivering throat, his sable hide is scored deeply with bloody gashes, from which streams out his very life. He tries to plant his feet firmly, that he may die the more gamely. Now the lion's hind-legs touch the ground, for he recognises the strength of his prey, and seeks by other tactics to drag him down. The terrible agony of the bull is depicted in the wild roll of his bloodshot eyes, the great neck-veins swollen almost to bursting, the heavy painful breathing, and the crimson frothy streams of saliva flying from his mouth. As the lion releases for an instant the grip of one mighty paw from the bull's shoulder to get a fresh hold, the antelope, by a great effort of his fast failing strength, plants his forefeet, and wrenching free his lacerated neck, pierces his tearing, riving antagonist fairly through from shoulder to shoulder with "one fiery thrust" of his great curved horns, and then drops to his knees on the up-torn turf. Far and wide on the night air rolls a sound so prolonged, so terrible, so expressive of mad rage and fearful pain, that it even reaches the scared herd massed together on yon distant ridge, and again sends them flying off madly as before. The wounded lion, leaving his grip of the sable's throat, twists his maned neck round and seizes the rugged horns, red with their mingled life-blood, between his weakening jaws, and both fall together to the ground. The old bull is at the point of death, for his eyes glaze fast, his gallant heart throbs wildly, a dark sluggish stream pours from the torn throat, his once sleek hide is scarcely distinguishable through its coating of blood and dirt. His lithe antagonist has freed himself from the rough horns that impaled him, but his race is run: his eyes no longer flash fire; the torn and draggled mane no longer waves in the wind, but hangs in clotted tufts; two great gaping wounds are in his side, from out of which hang shreds of palpitating flesh, and the frothy lung-blood flows unrestrained. He creeps away, dazed and sullen, to a near patch of dense cover, and lies down. Soon after, a gasping, choking roar echoes over the battle-field, and is borne away over the darkening land on the wings of a wild gust of wind which sweeps down along the river. Then a lull, and in total silence—for the sable lies dead—the great broken teeth clench over the tongue, the forepaws clutch spasmodically at the surrounding bushes, and the erstwhile desert-chief is dead!

There can be no question of the ability of a full-grown bull sable to kill even such a terrible antagonist as a lion, if he gets the chance, although almost sure to lose his own life in the encounter. The neck is wonderfully massive, all muscle and sinew, and the dexterity with which he wields his horns is such as to leave no room for doubt as to the fate of any soft-skinned foe that receives the points. But of course it is not the plan of a lion to give that chance, and his strength and agility usually make him master of the situation.

I one day saw a very plucky attempt made by two of my Swazi hunters, both young fellows, to assegai a sable antelope bull which I had wounded. He did not go far before we ran into him, and he stood at bay. I was about to give it another shot, when Muntumuni asked me to let him and his companion assegai it. It was most amusing and interesting to see the great activity they displayed in circling round the bull with upraised assegais, watching for an opportunity to get their weapons home, leaping about here and there, feinting on one side and running in on the other: but the bull's wariness and activity were quite equal at least to theirs, and for a long time they could not so much as prick him, whilst he once or twice nearly made it "hot" for one or other of them. The bull stood with his back against some low thorn-bushes; the ground was clear on either side of him, but about 10 or 12 yards in front was a fair-sized thorn-tree, against which I was standing. At last Muntumuni made a feint so close in front of him that the bull's attention was for an instant taken away from Mvelafuti, who on the instant got home with his assegai in the near shoulder. The bull, in the act of rushing at Muntumuni, brought his horns round with a sounding sweep, sent the assegai-shaft, which broke off, spinning into the air, and then charged down on Muntumuni. He ran for the thorn-tree where I stood, and I really thought to see him ripped up. It was the narrowest shave possible, for some of the boy's skin-tails were torn off by the horns as the bull came with a crash against the thorn-tree, sending the bark flying in all directions. It was too close to me also to be pleasant, and as further delay only became greater cruelty, I dropped him with a shot in the head.

Just one other little incident and I have done. On one occa-

sion I had wounded a fine sable bull, but being very badly mounted, lost him. The following morning my two companions, who were accompanying me to the hunting-veldt, rode out somewhere in the direction taken by my wounded bull, whilst I remained in camp to skin a koodoo head. They were riding along on top of a ridge about ten o'clock in the morning, the one several yards in advance of the other. Suddenly W——, who was behind, pulled up, for almost at his feet, and within a few yards of where H—— had ridden past, lay a fine old sable antelope bull, apparently stone-dead, with his horns curved back into the ground, and the nose pointing skyward. "Hi, H——, look here; here's K——'s bull; it's dead!" he shouted.

Is it, by George? Scarcely had the words left his mouth when the sable sprang to its feet, though not before W—— had fired into it from the saddle. A loud bellowing grunt, a crashing of branches, "Look out, H——! look out!" and away dashes the sable.

H——, who has heard of the sable's combativeness, already imagines himself upon the point of being impaled, so digging the spurs into his horse, darts off. He is a fine horseman, but I doubt if ever he rode so straight and well as he did that day, when those warning words rang in his ears, "Look out, H——! look out!" Of course W—— only wished him to "look out" for a shot. They never saw that sable again; and probably the latter was never caught napping again. As for me—well, the choicest bits out of 'Three Men in a Boat' never caused me such uncontrollable laughter as that with which I listened to their recital of this curious incident.

And now, thou noblest, bravest, most graceful of thy kind, farewell! I have endeavoured to extol thy praises, not with a view to hastening thy extermination by calling the pitiless gunner into the field, but to arouse the sympathy and interest of the naturalist-sportsman, and perchance to recall to the minds of many good men and true—whose rifles are now laid aside and hang with their much-prized trophies on their home walls—stirring incidents of their South African hunter's life, amongst the many well-remembered forms of which stands forth not the least prominently that of the gallant fighting sable.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE GIRAFFE AND ITS HABITS.

In danger of extinction—Preservation necessary—Playing at legislation—What the burghers, and others, say—How the natives obey the law—Specimens for museums—Young giraffe for the Zoological Gardens—Expenses connected with their capture—Height of giraffe—Coloration—Stump-tails—Value on the market—*Sjamboks*—Paces—Good over rough ground—Through the bush—A diving feat—Twins—Independent of water—Difficult of detection—Their companions—Is giraffe-shooting sportsman-like?—Its fascinations—The reverse—Boers, gunners, and sportsmen—A plea for giraffe—"Stink-bulls"—A fine waterbuck—Not dead yet—An old stager—Marrow-bones—My horse leaves me—A lucky shot—Chopping—Helpless but fearless.

At the present day the giraffe has the honour, which perhaps it may share with the bison of North America, of being, with perhaps the one exception of the white rhinoceros, the foremost amongst the fauna of the whole world in the minds and thoughts of naturalists, museum authorities, and zoological collectors. In former times this unique specimen of Nature's handiwork always aroused curiosity and interest on account of its great size, its peculiar form, and imperfectly known habits; but now, whilst the same feelings with regard to it exist, they are intensified by the fact that these harmless and beautiful creatures—standing alone without allied living species, and but few extinct ones, and those doubtful—are upon the verge of utter extermination; and that unless some stringent measures are adopted to preserve them, the day is not far distant when they will be spoken of as things that were, but are no longer. Fortunately, I believe active steps are being taken in some countries where they are still not

rare, to do this—the Chartered Company being foremost in the good work ; so there is no doubt that in the territories south of the Zambesi their wholesale destruction will become a thing of the past, while its extinction in the Soudan and Nile districts may reasonably be expected to be for the present postponed. But in the benighted State upon the confines of which lies the hunting district of which I write, there are practically no obstacles whatever placed in the way of its extermination ; and though its all-wise rulers are well aware of the fact, as also of another—that nearly two hundred giraffe are killed yearly in the north-eastern districts—they have not yet framed a law to limit such slaughter ! It has been a generally mistaken idea that there were but very few giraffes in the State up till quite recently ; whereas as lately as six years ago very large numbers of them existed on the borders, and away on the flats to the east of the Libombo, in Portuguese territory ; and I write with authority when I state that nearly two hundred, and occasionally quite that number, have been killed—that is, bagged—annually of late years, to say nothing of those killed by Kafirs, or wounded ones which get away to die. It is terrible to think about such slaughter.

This utter want of discretion is quite unpardonable in the powers that be ! But what between the displeasure of the Transvaal burghers at having their shooting curtailed on the one hand, and the too evident disappearance of the game on the other, they find themselves “between the devil and the deep sea,” so that very shortly the giraffe bids fair to be as unknown a quantity in the State as the buffalo, elephant, eland, and the algebraical x .¹

For all practical purposes, the passing of the Game Law of 1892 was merely playing at legislation, a single £10 licence covering permission to kill giraffe, rhinoceros, eland, and buffalo.

¹ Since the above was written the Game Laws of the South African Republic have been revised, and the Volkraad of that State has done away with the £10 licence altogether, the destruction of such game as by the old law might be shot under that licence—viz., giraffe, eland, buffalo, and rhinoceros—being prohibited.

But as a sop to the Boer Cerberus, it is ordained that, as regards the £3 and the £1, 10s. licences, the greater shall cover the less ; thus enabling any one with a £3 licence (which before gave its holder the right to shoot only the larger antelopes) to kill the smaller game—such as reedbuck, bushbuck, duiker, rhé buck, &c.—without taking out a separate licence (£1, 10s.), as was before necessary.

That the three latter are nearly extinct now is a fact beside the question. Those who cannot find these animals will "take it out in giraffe," as I heard it remarked on one occasion. And as one good giraffe more than pays for the licence, the latter is indeed merely an incentive to slaughter—"We have to pay for them, so we'll kill them." To the record of destruction given above must be added the damage done by natives; and here is another proof of Government inconsistency and incapacity. I believe that more firearms were obtained by natives of this State during the years 1891-92 than during any previous period of ten years. At any rate more of the modern class of rifles—cheap Martinis principally—were brought into the country; and this in open defiance of the law that forbids natives to purchase or even carry firearms. The *bonâ-fide* storekeeper or trader is forbidden to sell firearms or ammunition under heavy penalty, and yet no obstacle whatever is placed in the way of natives purchasing them in almost unlimited quantities just over the border.

These weapons are used with disastrous effect upon all the smaller game of the country, whilst the large game is constantly harassed by parties of "Portuguese" Kafirs, who during the summer-time—the breeding season, be it remembered—swarm over the Libombo and overrun the game district. So that not only do the natives resident in the State—who are forbidden the purchase and use of firearms for any purpose but the protection of their crops—shoot when, where, and what they like, but strange Kafirs, non-residents, are allowed to shoot big game *in the close season*! I say "allowed" advisedly; for "silence gives consent." And in proportion to their numbers, giraffe probably suffer the most. I have frequently taken as many as five, six, or even seven Kafir bullets out of a giraffe, their flesh being consequently quite unfit for food. In fact, nothing will save these interesting animals from complete extermination but the strictest preservation from all shooting whatever for a term of years.

And I would also strongly urge that some movement be set on foot to secure young animals for our zoological collections, and typical specimens for the national museums. Until the arrival of the cow last year I cannot recollect ever having seen South African giraffe at the London Zoological Society's Gardens.

When I was in England in 1884 the specimens then in the collection were, if I remember rightly, Abyssinian, or at all events North African—and weedy-looking creatures they were too. The South African animal is far more beautiful, if those fairly represented the North African variety (making all due allowances for the fact of their captivity), being much darker in colour, and with the marks upon the body smaller, of more frequent occurrence, and in greater contrast to the ground-colour of the hide. Of course, at the time those animals came into the Society's possession, it was a far easier and less expensive matter to obtain them from the Soudan and Nile districts; but now that these are practically closed, there seems no reason, except upon the score of expense, why specimens should not be procured from South Africa.

There are two districts from which they could be obtained—Khama's country and the Libombo flats; and the advantages are very greatly in favour of the latter. I have heard it stated that the initial cost of taking a giraffe home from Khama's country would be not less than £500, and a land journey would have to be undertaken of, I suppose, at least 1000 miles. For half that sum or less they could be taken home from the Libombo district—that is, supposing the Government were willing to permit the capture of a pair, as I have very little doubt they would be; and the land journey would not be more than, say, 150 miles. At the same time, it cannot be expected that any private individual could undertake the expense and risk, and it is hard on the Zoological Society, as a self-supporting body, to have to do it. So why not make it a national question? for surely it is worth it—far more so than many over which the nation spends thousands.

I endeavoured during the seasons 1891-92 to make arrangements with the London Zoological Society for the capture of some young giraffe, and, while negotiations were pending, secured two: one I caught in 1891, and the other was caught by a friend of mine who was hunting with me in 1892. But the arrangements fell through, seeing that the Society only engage to take delivery of animals in London, and we considered the risk too great to undertake the task of delivering them there. Some one who thoroughly understands the treatment of these animals

in captivity should be on the spot to take charge. The initial expenses thus incurred would perhaps be a little more, but it would be cheaper in the long-run, as entailing less risk.¹

So much has been written about the giraffe in sporting and other works, that any attempt on my part to enter into a detailed description would be superfluous. I am tempted, however, to jot down a few remarks, but more in connection with the hunting of the animal than anything else.

What is the height of a full-grown bull giraffe? Hardly any two sportsmen seem to agree upon an answer to this, the measurement given being usually "about" so many feet, ranging between 15 and 20. I would not say that a giraffe never attained a height of 20 feet, but I am sure that I have never seen such a one. Formerly I actually believed I had shot giraffe of that height, but careful measurements taken since have satisfied me of my mistake. The largest giraffe that I can ever recollect shooting I was unable to measure accurately. It was during the season of 1891. I had no tape-line with me, and being after lions at the time, had no means of procuring one; but I measured him roughly by spans—twenty-five spans, full, from top of horn to the heel—and as I span within a fraction of 10 inches, that would give very nearly 21 feet! Deduct, say, a foot for the horns and for the difference between the height as measured over the curves, and the perpendicular would give nearly 20 feet from the heel to the crown of the head. But I feel certain this was inaccurate, as on another occasion I measured a very large bull, almost as large as that one, and it gave 19 feet 1 inch to the crown of the head. Deduct 6 inches for the difference between height as taken and the perpendicular, and it leaves 18 feet 7 inches in a straight line from crown to heel. The height of a full-grown cow ranges from 15 feet 6 inches to 16 feet.

Giraffes vary a great deal in colour, from lightest fawn to a very dark orange-brown, with almost black patches on the body, the lower limbs being invariably lighter in colour, and pale buff or white inside. These dark-coloured animals look quite black

¹ The Zoological Society of London now have in their possession a fine specimen of the South African giraffe, a three-parts-grown cow, which they recently acquired by purchase; and the Society is to be congratulated upon their energetic action in securing it for the national collection.

when seen from a distance. It is an opinion generally held that giraffes attain a deeper colouring with age; but I am certain that this is not always, or even often, the case. I have frequently seen young bulls, three-parts-grown cows, and even young things, quite as dark as any old bull, and old animals of both sexes very pale in colour. Giraffes are furnished with thick bristly caps upon the knees, the bristles being of a similar texture to those upon its mobile lips, and doubtless of great service to it when supporting its enormous weight upon its knees. The longest giraffe-tail I ever secured measured exactly 4 feet from the root of the longest hairs to the tips. They are much prized by the natives, who will readily give from £1 to £1, 10s. for good ones: they use them for making up into necklaces and bangles.

I do not know whether giraffe ever bite one another's tails off, but it is a singular fact that very many giraffe are met with having stump-tails; and it is most ludicrous, when riding behind them, to see them screwing this ungainly-looking stump about, just in the same way as they would do if they had the full brush.

Giraffe-hides are in great demand, especially amongst the Boers, for making up into waggon-whips. A full-grown bull hide will cut up into sixty good whips, which when "brayed"—as the operation of softening is termed—fetch from 4s. 6d. to 6s. each upon the market. As *sjamboks*, they are not in it with seacow-hide, being apt to break, as does rhinoceros-hide.

It is well known that the giraffe is capable of a very high rate of speed, and is most enduring; indeed when once they get into full swing, unless hard pressed from the first, they can keep up their peculiar shuffling stride long after the best horse is completely out of it. But a horseman scores by pressing them to the utmost limit of their speed at the first, when they soon become winded, slow down, and can easily be run into. But it is only an exceptionally good horse in these parts that can fairly run round a giraffe, and as a shot from behind, properly placed about 15 inches above the root of the tail, brings them down at once, it is not usual to attempt to ride up alongside, except with the object of cutting out one or more from a troop. With a broken leg a giraffe of course cannot go at all, as they move the front and hind-legs on one side forward at the same time, so they are

completely helpless. Giraffe are very skilful at avoiding dangerous ground, where a false step might bring them to grief; but over great rough stones they can travel at a wonderful pace, and the horseman who follows at speed must value his neck at very little. They are quite unable to jump even the narrowest donga; if they can shuffle or stride over it they will do so, otherwise they will turn off, unless they can run down into it and out on the other side.

When disturbed in fairly open country, they will usually make their point for the nearest bush, and to see a troop of them sailing away through the obstacles presented in such cases is a sight of the hunting-veldt. They look very grand and stately going over open ground, but comparison is needed if one is to realise their great height; and this is obtained where there is plenty of bush and fair timber. They never make a false turn or enter a *cul-de-sac*, for they overlook the bush and can see at once where an entrance or exit is possible. Their thick hides feel nothing of the terrible hooks of the wait-a-bit thorns, though the 'mayanda—red-billed weaver birds (*Textor erythrorynchus*), their faithful winged companions—are oftentimes sorely puzzled to retain their hold upon the shoulders or quarters of the flying giant as he rushes at speed through the thick bush. The giraffe always knows instinctively which branches are and which are not to be trifled with: if comparatively slender, rotten, or pliant, he simply breaks them down with his chest or neck, when they fall clattering over his shoulders and back, or else forces his way through them, when they recoil and close together behind him, like the jaws of a trap; and woe betide the pursuing horseman if he follows closely enough behind to receive a back-hander,—he will not forget it that day! Where thick heavy branches oppose his progress, the giraffe does not turn aside, but, with perhaps the most graceful action of which he is capable, bends down his long neck even to below the line of the withers, as he sweeps along under the overhanging foliage, raising it again when the danger is past. He appears never to bend lower than necessary, being satisfied with a few inches to spare between the tips of his horns and the object he would avoid. It is wonderful to see the way they glide through thick forest, where the trees are large and growing close together: in and out, to right

or left, they seem to weave their way, as it were, between the stems; and all so easily, even through bush where a horseman needs all his watchfulness to avoid an accident.

All wild animals invariably judge their distance with extreme accuracy in such cases. I remember upon one occasion racing a sable antelope bull through some very thick bush, and when pressed hard, it turned suddenly off into a particularly dense patch, dashing at top speed through an opening in which I could barely kneel without my head touching the branch above. I



He sweeps along under the overhanging foliage.

noticed the place particularly, as after killing the sable I had to take the back-spoor to find my hat, which was pulled off by the bushes. Two stout trees grew on either side, and their branches locked overhead at about 4 feet 6 inches from the ground; and as the bull stood 4 feet 4 inches at the shoulders, and above them carried a massive neck and a pair of 39-inch horns, the feat seemed almost impossible.

Another time I saw a leopardess literally dive from a flat overhanging rock, 15 feet in height, through an opening between

some other boulders, into which I could not possibly crawl, alighting on the bottom of a sort of cave 5 feet below the entrance. The lightning speed with which it darted through so apparently impassable a place was a sight to be remembered.

Giraffe usually give birth to one calf between the months of November and February, but the breeding season appears to vary considerably. I have seen two and three months' old calves running with their dams in July and August. Twice I have known giraffe to have twins; this, I fancy, is very unusual.

These animals can live almost independently of water, although usually in well-watered districts they drink somewhat frequently. I have seen a troop of eleven giraffe coming regularly down to the water to drink, every night for a week. On the other hand, during the season of 1891 a small coterie of five giraffe—two young bulls, two cows, and a calf—frequented a spot within about a mile of my camp, and on the day following that upon which I saw them first, I was hunting along the river-bank, and, at a spot perhaps a mile and a half distant from their feeding-ground, came upon the five in the act of drinking: they leisurely made off towards their favourite spot as I approached. As I was anxious to procure a photograph of the group when drinking, I haunted that river-bank for eight days afterwards, but there was no spoor whatever to indicate that they had visited the water during that period. They had not left the locality, as I or some of my boys saw them every day; and though they might have visited some other water, we never cut their spoor going in any other direction.

The great difficulty of detecting giraffe in some places is well known, but should be experienced to be fully realised. There are few sportsmen who have hunted in localities where giraffe are found, but have been deceived by their tall motionless figures. They stand perfectly still, not even swishing their tails like wildebeeste, and thus bringing about instant recognition; their mottled or dark colour, great height, and comparatively narrow bodies give them a striking resemblance to the many old varicoloured relics of the forest, blasted by lightning or by bush-fires; and then a pair of field-glasses is really necessary to decide with certainty what one is looking at. And the deception is often the other way, tree-stumps being mistaken for giraffe; but

the mistake can seldom happen if the animals stand broadside, as the neck is always carried at an angle from the body, except when they stand staring hard at any one approaching closely. In certain lights giraffe appear quite white, particularly the lighter coloured cows, when standing end on, with the sun shining upon them.

Except in places where they have been much hunted, giraffe never seem in any hurry to move off, so long as the wind does not warn them of danger. They will usually see a man long before he has made them out, yet they will stand watching until he gets quite close up, if he does not walk or ride too directly towards them. It cannot be that they stand thus, trusting to their colour and stillness to escape detection, as, long after they must be aware that they are seen, they will stand watching. But once they have made up their minds to go, they wait to ask no questions, but screw up their tails and go straight away. And the ghostly manner of their disappearance is most remarkable. I have often been riding up to them, when some other object has drawn my attention off for a few moments; glance again, and they are gone! Not merely gone to a distance though still in sight, but gone utterly, vanished like a mist-wreath at sunrise. Indeed, strange as it may seem, few animals are so easily lost sight of, if once the attention is taken from them, their bodies being always concealed behind the thick foliage of the trees, and their long legs merely doing duty for tree-stems.

Giraffe do not go hard up-hill, and seldom tackle a steep slope if pursued, but down-hill they can rattle away at a tremendous pace, sending small stones and turf flying behind them.

Burchell's zebra, wildebeeste, and ostriches appear to be the giraffe's favourite companions, or he is theirs; whether it is a mutual arrangement or not, one cannot say. When disturbed, however, the giraffe always looks after number one, leaving his smaller and more erratic friends to shape their own course.

The flesh of a fat cow-giraffe is delicious, and the brisket the best part, not even excepting the marrow-bones, in my opinion. The old bulls, however, are absolutely uneatable, sometimes emitting so disgusting an odour that the refined Boers give them the too-suggestive name of "stink-bulls"; and I have seen them so bad that I would not care to lay a

hand upon their carcasses. But the perfume emitted by a troop of giraffe, if one is below wind, is the very reverse, and the best efforts of Rimmel are nowhere in comparison.

Very great difference of opinion exists amongst sportsmen as to whether giraffe-hunting is a pursuit which can be indulged in with a clear conscience, and the fact that the question should arise points to some grounds for reasonable doubt. It is, I believe, by many considered the *ne plus ultra* of African sport, and by those, too, who could not possibly be guilty of wanton cruelty. Certainly one can scarcely consider it an elevating form of sport—too often it is lowering for the giraffe, as well as for horse and rider—for it calls forth neither endurance, courage, nor extraordinary skill on the part of the hunter. Practically speaking, if he has a good horse which he can stick to, and can hit a haystack, there is not the slightest reason why he should not count his slain giraffe by the score. At the same time, it is not to be denied that there is something wonderfully fascinating and keenly exciting in a flying race on a good horse after a troop of these animals. The country through which the chase leads, the wonderful effect caused by the great striding, swaying troop in front of one, the feeling of exultation inseparable from a stiff gallop on a good mount, all combine to render attractive that which comes perilously near to deserving a very different name. It is certain that all the interest of the sport is centred in the run, for when once the giraffe is brought to a stand nothing but honest pity can be felt for its beautiful, stately helplessness. None with any real English grit in them will pretend that they derive from the fall of one of these great harmless creatures the same amount of satisfaction afforded by the death of a lion or buffalo. But all our hares cannot be buffalo, nor our foxes lions, so it is not well to set up too high a standard. To those who enjoy an exciting race on a good horse over rough country, giraffe-hunting offers great, almost unequalled, attractions; the only question is, whether the feeling of pity for its resultant death does not outweigh the previous short-lived pleasure. It is so easy to take life, so impossible to restore it by endless regrets.

As to the killing of giraffe being justifiable, well, as in everything else, a justification satisfactory at any rate to the one most concerned will be found. But am I right in saying "the one

most concerned"? Methinks not; surely the great silent giraffe claims that position!

The Boers put forth as their justification that the animals were placed upon the earth for man's use; they do not distinguish between use and abuse. They require meat, and prefer to kill wild game rather than their own stock. They want money; the proceeds of the hunt in the shape of hides, &c., supply that want. If they cultivated the land and produced the thousand and one necessities which, to the shame of the country be it said, now have to be imported, they would also get money; but then, don't you know, hunting is far more pleasurable an occupation than tilling the soil! So far, after all, the Boer's justification is not an unreasonable one, if only he would learn moderation.

Whether the "gunner" has, or even thinks that he has, any justification or not is a moot-point. He likes to benefit the gun-makers by expending as many rounds of ammunition as he can in the shortest possible time, and he hates the sight of a head of wild game so long as it stands upon its four legs; when struggling in the death agonies, ah, yes, then it is worth looking at! And then, you know, it is *so* nice to be able to say, "I killed so many head of game." All his actions, all his pleasures, hinge upon the possibility, the hope, of being able to out-score some one else.

Then we have the true sportsman as he is known to his brother-sportsmen. He believes he has his justification in going forth to slay. The ideas of the gunner will never enter his head; he will feel more true pleasure in securing one good trophy than in laying low scores of animals which carry none,—in fact, he will refrain from doing the latter, and that because the love of true sport is his justification. Whether he seeks to enrich science or to add to his own collection of trophies matters little; he seeks the display of his skill, courage, and endurance, and he uses, not abuses.

Seeing that "thems my sentiments," it will not, I feel sure, be thought for a moment that this is written with a wish to decry sport in which many take the greatest pleasure; but I would urgently plead for some mercy for this most magnificent creature, and oppose to the last its reckless destruction. Thus am I impelled—quite apart from the knowledge of the fact that

under the existing state of things it is likely to become ere long exceedingly rare, if not extinct—to urge all true sportsmen to put a limit to their desires, and to let enough suffice. For myself, I admit to liking a good gallop after a troop of giraffe, but not to be for ever harassing them.

I have had occasion to make previous reference to the old bull-giraffes, styled by the Boers “stink-bulls,” and of two such animals I have a very lively recollection. One was shot by a friend of mine, with whom I was hunting, about eight years ago, and I think it about “took the cake” from all I have ever seen for real, downright, powerful, tangible odour; but the other, which I shot in July 1891, would have about run a dead-heat with him. He was in company with another fine bull and a cow, and I came suddenly on them whilst racing after a big waterbuck bull that I had done my utmost to secure, as he carried a splendid head. The bush, however, was very dense, and the ground strewn with large slippery cobble-stones, making the going abominable, and somehow the bull eluded me; and on emerging from a long straggling thicket of low thorn-trees I saw a troop of about twenty-five or thirty wildebeeste, and a lot of impala; the waterbuck was nowhere to be seen—he had saved his hide by laying me on to other game. I pulled in at once, watching the wildebeeste, when my after-rider, Muntumuni, drew my attention elsewhere by saying suddenly, “Buka, baas, buka, nanti ’tihuhla!” (“Look, sir, look, there’s giraffe!”) I only got a glimpse of them, as they were moving away rapidly when the boy noticed them, but we gave chase at once, and after reaching somewhat better ground, came up on them hand over hand. As they turned down into a reedy river, we spurted up, and I gave the big black bull a shot as he was leading out of the other bank. Directly he got on top of the bank he turned off from his companions, and moved slowly ahead. I saw that he was done for, or rather I thought so, and calling to my after-rider to finish him off with a shot in the head, galloped on after the other bull, a fine big fellow, but very light in colour. I could not catch some answer from Muntumuni as I rode off, heading for a thick grove of acaciæ into which the giraffe turned; but it appeared afterwards that he had endeavoured to tell me that he had no cartridge-belt, having forgotten it at the camp.

I secured the other bull, after a short gallop, with two shots I was using a double 10 smooth-bore with 7 drams, and had dismounted to cut off the tail and cover him up, when I heard a distant "cooey" from Muntumuni. Although I had not heard the shot with which I supposed he would have finished off the bull, I thought nothing of it, as the sound of the report would be drowned by the noise of my horse's hoofs when galloping over the hard ground; and I believed he was merely calling to let me know where he was. But when the "cooey" was repeated in a different direction, I knew it was time to be moving, as he was evidently racing after something. The last call sounded much nearer, and I had not cantered far when, to my surprise, I saw the old bull, which I thought long since dead, coming along full split in my direction, heading so as to pass me at about 100 yards, and followed by Muntumuni at a sharp canter. The bull made no attempt to turn off, even when I rode up 40 yards closer, and dismounting I gave him both barrels in the shoulder, one of the bullets actually passing through the lower part of the heart. He shook all over, but, to my surprise, instead of falling, he screwed up his tail and went harder, at a pace that took me a quarter of an hour nearly to overhaul him. I then rode up alongside and gave him another shot, when he fell to the ground with a crash, dead. He was indeed a veritable old stager. What age he would be is a matter best known to himself; I would not care to hazard a guess at it. He was blind on the near side, which accounted for his not swerving from me when I approached him upon that side, and was frightfully torn and mangled on the hind-quarters by a lion or lions. But they met their match when they tackled that old fellow, although the poor brute's life must have been a positive misery to him afterwards, for the wounds were sloughing dreadfully, and could not but cause him intense pain. The boys afterwards took three Martini bullets out of him, and four Kafir bullets—stones encased in lead, two of which were in the paunch; and as for its odour—I think I can best describe it by saying that it was indescribable!

Muntumuni said that he had thrown his assegai at its chest when it came to a stand (that boy would never leave his beloved assegai; if I had given him a battery of rifles to carry he would take his assegai all the same). The weapon only stuck in the

skin and hung, and fell out when the giraffe again moved forward. He then dismounted to pick it up, when the giraffe, blowing loudly, advanced and chopped viciously at him with its front-feet, eventually treading on and breaking the assegai. The boy then mounted again, and was endeavouring to drive the bull towards where he had heard my last shot, when he met me. I had no meat at the waggon, and thinking the all-pervading odour of the beast could not well have tainted the marrow, I tried some on biscuit: it is needless to state what was the immediate result; but this I will say, that I have never thoroughly enjoyed giraffe marrow-bones since!

One day during the season of 1892 I witnessed a most determined attack on the part of a giraffe cow. I had wounded her, but when I got down to fire a second shot my horse bolted, taking a bee-line for camp; so I followed the cow on foot, but she went hard, and I failed to come up with her. Some of my boys at last joined me, and we took the spoor together, eventually sighting her on a long open ridge on the edge of some thin bush. She was then walking slowly forward, and I managed to run up to about 150 yards from her, when she saw me, and twisting her tail up over her back, again set out at a stiff pace. As a last chance I knelt down and tried another shot, and it brought her to a stand at once, the bullet—540-grain Metford—having raked her and lodged under the skin of the chest. She now walked slowly up to a large solitary thorn-tree, under the shade of which she stood. I told one of the boys to finish her off with a shot in the head from his Snider, but it missed fire, so I gave him my rifle. He advanced towards the tree, the cow being about 15 yards away, and having laid his gun and bundle of assegais against the tree, was just about to fire when the cow made a stride forward, and rearing up, chopped most savagely at him: he just pulled the rifle off anyhow, and bolted. The giraffe's hoofs struck the tree quite 7 feet up, scattering the bark on all sides, and breaking two of the assegais. I ran in and managed to lay hold of the Snider, but before I could use it the cow fell over dead.

Such instances do not often occur, however, for as a rule giraffe make no attempt to retaliate, though they can kick out like an ox sometimes if one approaches too closely. I have heard it denied that they can kick in that way, but have seen them do it,

and with great force too. And it is just this passive yielding to fate that takes away all the charm and excitement of the hunt. How can one look unmoved at this great noble creature, practically devoid of weapons of defence, when, hopeless of escape, he slackens speed and turns round to face you squarely, without shrinking, without sound, without attempt at revenge, whilst the great tear-drops course one another down its face, welling from soft, dark, languishing eyes that have not their equal for beauty upon earth? Can you look on your handiwork without a feeling of deepest pity, fatal to all pleasure, and of regret that the first cruel shot has ever been fired? Merely the freak of a fanciful mind, is it? I should be loth to think so, even though you who do will take keener delight in giraffe-hunting than I. But do not believe it—the capacity to enjoy life, innate in all animals, could not exist apart from the consciousness of pain and death; and if ever the crested front and lowered horns of the wounded sable, and the flashing eyes and gleaming teeth of the stricken lion at bay, meant revenge first, death afterwards, surely then the tearful eyes, the twitching mouth, the quivering limbs of the helpless giraffe, as it stands with reddened sides—gazing down, one can imagine, half scornfully, half beseechingly—express wonder at man's inhumanity besides its own bitter pain!

CHAPTER XVII.

GIRAFFE-HUNTING.

Wild game in its native haunts—A burnt-up region—A glimpse of Eden—Burchell's zebra—A social outcast—Impala—A patriarch—A grand troop—Hereditary lunatics—Subdued into quiet—The law of force—Man its most active exponent—"We'll have a spin, anyway!"—The alarm spreads—Marching orders—Reinforcements—Eager for a run—A stiff gallop—Equal to the occasion—A kaleidoscope—Headed—Almost down—Wildebeeste in the way—On to the burn again—In the dust-cloud—Cutting out—The troop splits up—Shooting a deserter—His last run—A crowner—Well shaken—The end—Muntumuni as an after-rider—A race after cheeta—Giving me a lead—Losses—Giraffe-hunting on foot—Stalking a troop—Thorns—Suspicious—"Go 'way!"—Discovered—Two new arrivals—Off!—Right and left—A curious circumstance—Barter—Lose a chance at four lions—"True, 'tis pity."

THE sight of any wild game in its natural haunts forms a picture not easily to be forgotten, but that of a troop of stately giraffe, stalking slowly across a grassy glade, or feeding at leisure through some shady acacia-grove, adds the seal of perfection to such, and it becomes one of the most vividly beautiful scenes of nature that can charm the eye of man.

I can well remember one day, two seasons ago, I and my after-rider had been in the saddle ever since sun-up, riding for mile after mile in search of giraffe, over a black, ash-strewn, desert country, and had found it both thirsty and tiring work: the whisky in the holster-flask (carried in case of accidents) could give no relief—it would have been veritable fire-water under the circumstances—and we longed for a drink of cool water, no matter how brackish it might have been. Our rifles were already feeling twice their ordinary weight, and the barrels

burned our hands like red-hot bars. A slight depression in the ground in front of us and the greener appearance of the trees seemed to hold out hopes of our finding water, and we rode forward, having decided that whether there was water there or not, we would off-saddle for a few minutes to give the horses a roll. Crossing through an extensive hollow, where the hot black dust took the horses over their fetlocks, and hung in grimy clouds around us as we moved along, we ascended the opposite slope, which was strewn with boulders, cropping grimly up on all sides, and entered a grove of charred and blackened "camel-thorns" (*Acacia giraffæ*), where the grass had only burnt off in patches, that which was left after the fire had passed over it being yellow and singed; still it was grass, and that was something after the howling waste through which we had been riding. Here we came suddenly on the spoor of a single bull giraffe, quite fresh, and we rode along it under the shade of the trees; then topping the ridge, from out of a dead black world, palpitating with heat, and whose atmosphere was alive with fine penetrating ash, scattered in all directions by the flying whirlwinds, we entered a paradise of perfect beauty, only a narrow strip of half-burnt grass separating the dead from the living, for from the creek that lay before and below us innumerable springs of water welled out, and the whole surrounding country was bright with gorgeous emerald. Groves of newly-blossoming acaciæ clothed the rising ground upon either hand, and hid from our view the upper end of the creek, while thickets of the evergreen "impala-bush," intersected in all directions by damp cool game-paths, were glowing under the noonday heat. A cool scent-laden breeze rustled through the shimmering foliage, swaying the golden flower-drops of the mimosæ, and kissing the trembling reeds in the creek and the cool waving grass along its banks. The air was alive with humming, droning insect-life; great gorgeous butterflies on fairy, purple-eyed wings, fanned themselves through the groves; happy swallows, on tireless pinions, skimmed and darted, while the beams of the brilliant African mid-day sun shone through the trees with flickering play of light and shade.

A perfect Eden, and in more respects than I have suggested, for this lovely spot was actually alive with game. The wind had

not revealed our presence, we were well hidden in the half-scorched grove of trees, and the beauty and quiet of the place seemed to have brought all within the spell of its enchantment.

Quickly slipping from our saddles, and loosening the girths, we removed the clanking bits, placed our rifles out of the flashing sunlight, and then, while we rested, I at any rate gave myself up to silent admiration, though my matter-of-fact companion's capability in this respect was probably limited to round sterns and plump briskets. Lying down in the grass, and carefully removing the long stalks which intercepted our view, we saw just in front of us, and not more than 150 yards distant, a troop of fifty or more Burchell's zebra, scattered about in the vicinity of a tall bush-covered ant-heap. Most of them were lying motionless in the short grass, but one grand stallion stood near the ant-heap, lazily tossing his head up and down, and whisking off the too troublesome flies from his flanks and between his legs with his tail. He may have been self-constituted sentry, but if so, he deserved the guard-house, for he was certainly nearly asleep. Two others were standing somewhat nearer under the partial shade of a bush, the ever-changing lights causing them to appear all manner of colours, from perfectly black to pale silvery grey. On the farther side of the ant-heap, with his great flat muzzle buried up to the eyes in the cool grass, lay an old bull wildebeeste. He seemed to be a social outcast, for he kept himself well apart from his striped companions, and apparently owned no connection whatever with the nearest of two fine troops of his own species, each containing certainly close upon a hundred members. These, the nearest, distant about 180 yards, had probably lately arrived upon the scene, as many of them were moving about, and others just lying down for their mid-day rest; the farther troop was in the creek, walking in and out amongst the long grass and reeds, where they had been drinking and rolling in the mud. A few scattered members were feeding up through the impala-bush in company with a straggling band of impalas, the tail-end of a far larger troop of possibly two hundred and fifty upon the opposite ridge. These spring-buck of the Low Country add greatly to the charm of such a scene, their graceful movements and rich warm colouring being very striking.

Away to our right, some 250 yards off, seven splendid giraffe were standing around and amongst a small thicket of "camel-thorns," cropping a stray spray of the tender leafage here and there, but for the most part standing dignified and motionless, sun and shade playing alternate freaks of light and shadow upon their rich glossy hides. Two others lay in the grass away from the trees, their long necks having exactly the appearance of old stumps; and a grand old bull, of patriarchal mien, was with this select company. Even as we watched, shadowy moving objects appeared in the vicinity of the acacia clumps at the head of the creek, which gradually resolved themselves into five or six more giraffe. They walked up creek and passed round the head of the bush, returning down creek on our side, and shortly joining another troop, which we could now discern moving about in the bush just above the farthest troop of wildebeeste. We counted thirty-one of these splendid animals in all, including five or six youngsters.

It was the perfect harmony of the whole scene that struck me at once as I gazed, the

"Calm and deep peace in the wide air."

Had a defiant old sable antelope suddenly appeared amongst them, the charm would have come dangerously near rupture, for he has a way of carrying his proud head and curved horns, and a *noli me tangere* expression in his fine eyes, that would but ill accord with the lovely woodland scene we looked upon; and by the presence of King Leo the spell would have been utterly broken. The great, heavy-browed, flowing-maned wildebeeste, the only occupants of this happy spot, dowered with a heritage of lunacy, were evidently awed into comparatively submissive quiet, though the spirit of unrest would show itself at times, when one after another would stand up, walk a little way towards a comrade, at whom he would glare mischievously, paw up the ground, prance round in a circle with whisking tail, then, returning to the old spot, drop into the grass, and resting his broad muzzle on the ground, relapse into brief quiet. Thus we watched, and I felt I could never tire of it, for ever the flitting shapes in the impala-bush changed form and colour, each individual animal passing through complete transformation as it faced

us or moved away, on right or left, from the bush to the open ground, and back again into the half-light beneath some sparsely-foliaged trees, where

“Between the shadows
Floated the glowing sunlight.”

The great giraffe conveyed an idea of old-world life; they seemed what they were — things utterly apart, a different creation. Other animals herded with them, but they were not of them; they had nothing in common, save the reposeful contentment occasioned by their surroundings. These were real everyday facts, the giraffe—mysteries of Nature, without a link binding them to other creatures past or present.

But by the time I have feasted my eyes upon this beautiful scene, our horses have rested and cooled, and now a worse enemy than ever lion was or could be is planning to disturb the silence of this vale. Do you wonder? Where is the man without some touch of the old savage in him? Even the immortal gods of the ancients were not immaculate—

“For with the blood of Jove there always ran
Some viler part, some tincture of the man!”

The law of force, upon which the whole system of Nature is founded and built, everywhere prevails, and man is its most constant and energetic exponent.

See how with placid breast, softly murmuring, the tropic sea glistens and sparkles beneath a brilliant sun! The sky is cloudless, the air balmy, yet that great white-winged sea-bird is sailing slowly over the very spot upon which, a few hours later, a great steamship will lie a torn and shattered wreck upon a sunken coral-reef! And yet for all its hidden dangers the sea can smile sweetly enough, and give no sign.

The cool night air of the Low Country fans the tired sleeper as softly as though it did not bear fever and malaria upon its wings; the deepest, quietest pools ever conceal the largest crocodiles.

It is always thus in nature, and man, as one of her creation—even though he does arrogate to himself the position of the highest—cannot escape. There is that within him which force of circumstances some time or other must bring to the fore, and prove him but common clay. The desire to kill, his ready

obedience to the omnipresent law of force, is one of the lurking evils. Perhaps I should scarcely say the "desire to kill," for I hold that with a genuine sportsman it cannot be a mere love of destroying life; but whatever the desired end, the means employed are very similar.

But enough. I have heavy expenses to defray, and crowds of hungry Kafirs to feed, and so—"Come, Muntumuni, put the bridles on and tighten up your girths: we'll have a spin after the *kameel*, anyway!"

Once again in our saddles, we rode out from behind our screen of bush, and it was most interesting then to note how the alarm spread amongst the detached troops of game, and the different effects it produced on each. A group of wary impala, fully 200 yards away, I think saw us first, as they at once stood staring hard at us; but the Burchell's zebra were the first to take action, rising to their feet, as a fine stallion—but not the sleepy sentry—uttering a warning cry, trotted out from behind a tree, and, circling round, again pulled up some distance in front of us. The remainder followed suit, and handsome brutes they looked as they filed along with the light and shade playing over their boldly-striped hides. The old wildebeeste bull, sullen and shaggy, urged either by that innate curiosity or regardlessness of danger so characteristic of these strange creatures, would not move for some time from the spot upon which he stood, but contented himself with merely glancing from us to his quondam friends, evidently marvelling in his own mind at the queer combinations of the former and the childish fears of the latter. By this time all the other members of his own species, scattered here and there up and down the valley, had tardily awakened to a sense of something unusual taking place, and all were standing staring about them in whichever direction each individual thought danger might be feared. A shaggy old black bull, confirmed in his suspicions by the leaping files of impala crossing his front, was the first to lead off, and as the scattered bands formed up into more compact clumps, our curious friend also judged it time to move, and with a toss of his head and a sounding swish of his tail, he went through a few circus feats as a preliminary canter, then galloped off head down and heels up, twisting and turning, now this way, now that, but getting up

a speed which put him quickly first amongst, then at the head of, his striped friends, of whom he at once assumed the leadership.

Now the valley seemed all alive with moving objects, and particularly noticeable was the nearest large troop of wildebeeste, following one another in single file, their great broad backs bobbing up and down in unbroken succession, giving them that striking likeness to some huge serpentine monster of bygone ages which I always associate with this movement of wildebeeste. Dark lumbering forms twined in and out amongst the brilliant green of the impala-bush; the scattered groups of impala closed their ranks, stood gazing for an instant in massed columns of red and white, then darted off, lightly as birds on the wing, bounding, leaping, circling here and there, and frequently launching themselves into the air, like red streaks of light, high above the heads of their companions. Four or five ruddy-coloured koodoo cows started from their previously undetected hiding-place, and at a steady but somewhat clumsy canter joined the masses of moving game, till koodoo, wildebeeste, zebra, and impala seemed to vie with one another in rapid manœuvring and graceful evolutions.

But the giraffe acted very differently: it would ill become their stately grace to imitate the unseemly haste of the other game. The young things ran up to join their mothers, who stood gazing at us, utterly indifferent to the flying troops around them, as we quietly walked our impatient horses towards them. The old bull never moved; dignified and stately, he merely gazed at us, wondering doubtless at the centaur-like forms which came to disturb the peace and quiet of their happy valley. Little does he dream that he never again shall stand in that valley, or that the brilliant noontide sun above him shall cast the last beams of his setting upon his dappled hide, red and black with blood-stains and dusty ash! Else methinks those great powerful limbs would long ago have carried him, flying over ridge after ridge, to a place of safety! Very soon the others massed up, and as they reached a position half-way up the slope near to their leader, they again pulled up, then walked forward a few paces, turned and stood, moved on, and yet again stood in imposing array, watching us keenly and listening to the ominous tread of our horses' hoofs and the jingle of bit and curb-chain. My gallant grey was as fresh as paint again after his short rest, and could he but have

had a sup of water, would have been fit to go for a man's life. With eager step, arched neck, and ears pricked forward, he advanced. I could feel that thrill of excitement—which your old hunter cannot avoid — flash through his strong frame as he marked the game, and longed for the slight slacking of the reins and the word that should send him “for’ard away!” Quietly patting his great neck, the veins of which seemed swollen almost to bursting with pent-up energy and excitement, I turned to Muntumuni,—“Keep close to me, and we’ll try for the old bull.” A nod was his answer, followed by a suppressed “Nanti, se tiya gijima!” (“There, now they’re off!”) Simultaneously they all swing round, screw up their tails, and are away. I get well down in the saddle, cram my old *terai* on tightly, and take a firmer grip of the rifle. “So-ho, Moscow, my boy, now for it!” The reins are slackened a trifle, my feet well home in the irons, and with a great bound the grey is off, dropping at once into his long easy stride. The swishing grass-tops tell of the pace, and it is evident that unless they turn we shall be at the heels of the giraffe before they can enter the thick belt of thorn-trees on the ridge ahead. They quickly discover, however, that we are coming up with them, and not caring to face so stiff an incline at such a pace, with a great clattering of hoofs and swishing of tails, in a closely-packed, swaying, striding mass, they turn off at right angles down-hill, heading towards the creek at the bottom. Too well I know the stony nature of the country in that direction, and having no desire to cross it—especially as it would take us dead away from camp and from water—I made up my mind to try and prevent the giraffe from carrying out their intentions. Telling Muntumuni to keep on in their rear, I whisper a word of encouragement to my gallant steed, “Come, old boy, let’s see what you can do!” Well he knows what is required of him, and is equal to the occasion, for as I give him his head—he had been pulling hard hitherto—he sets off at a terrific pace down the steep and awkward slope, cutting up the turf at every stride, and crossing at an angle below the flying giraffe. Well done, Moscow! but if you happen to put your foot in an ant-bear hole now, it will be my last giraffe-hunt for certain!

To describe the movements of that fine troop would be, for me,

impossible, for so constantly and rapidly do their positions change that the eye cannot pick out any certain one or follow its actions accurately. It is just a great mass of swaying, surging life, topped by long necks, and borne along with seven-league strides, apparently ever in each other's way, yet never fouling, never slackening speed. And what a play of colour is there! The old bull, as he runs neck and neck with two fawn-coloured cows, looks black as raven's plume. A brilliant chestnut cow crosses him; without check he swings to the right, and at once the deep black becomes richest glowing orange-brown: then as he strides out half-left—after passing with graceful sweep of his great neck under the clustering branches of a widespreading thorn-tree, close to which he has had to run to avoid trampling a half-grown thing that has been striving to keep pace with one of the older cows, doubtless its mother—he heads his two former companions, and the glancing sunlight flashes over him and robes him in silver sheen. Such toning, mingling, and changing of colours—the eye is dazzled with their wonderful beauty!

But the fun is now growing fast and furious. The giraffe reach the creek, and in a stride are across, dropping smoothly into the shallow bed, though climbing out somewhat clumsily. A few of them, however, refuse to cross, and turn short back up the slope again. The old bull, which I wish to drive on towards camp, keeps with the main troop; but I am now close on their heels, a little below them and to the left, and only waiting for a good bit of going ground to cut in. As they run out of the creek, seeing they are about to be cut off from their point, the whole troop turns sharply off to the right, up creek again, heading for the line of thorn-trees on the ridge. At the spot where I strike the creek it is rather wide, but negotiable, and, steadied at the take-off, my good horse clears it with half a length to spare; but landing on some round slippery stones hidden in the grass, he stumbles heavily, nearly putting me on his neck, my irons touching the ground, though he quickly recovers, and once more swings into stride. The unexpected alteration in our course brings some new actors upon the scene, a large troop of blue wildebeeste rushing down at right angles across our front. Some of them turn out and join the giraffe, looking like the impish pigmy escort of a procession of giants; whilst others, with thick-

headed obstinacy, set themselves to cut in between me and the giraffe. Moscow indeed has almost to bore his way through the black mass, passing so closely to some of them that I actually hit one with the butt of my rifle. As the giraffe enter the bush, I am up within 50 yards of their sterns, and a glance back shows me Muntumuni not many yards in my rear. Down, down low on your horse's neck, if you don't wish to emulate Absalom in this strip of bush; and do not ride too close to the giraffe, lest even a worse evil befall you!

Just on the farther edge of the bush, where I had hoped to get on to good ground, we leave the grass, and a wide burnt-up area confronts us. The giraffes are clear; nothing intervenes to hide their great towering forms as they mass out in the open, going very steadily now, when suddenly, and before I am fairly clear of the thicket, a dense cloud of dusty ash rises between us, churned up by their great feet, its centre travelling with the game, its tail-end enveloping us. There is no possible chance of a shot now: the penetrating particles find their way in everywhere, into every crack and crevice of my rifle—into eyes, nose, and mouth; and save for an occasional glimpse of a swaying head or a swinging foot, the game is completely hidden from sight. But already the giraffe are inclined to bear away too far to the left, so it is time to cut in somehow, and calling upon Moscow for the first time with the spur, he promptly carries me right into the centre of the dust-cloud. To right and left scatter the striding game, and quickly passing by a clump of twelve or fourteen cows and young things, after glancing through them to see there were no big bulls, I gallop up on the off side of the remainder of the troop—which turn off half-left, and commence to straggle somewhat—thus getting a cross-wind which carries the dust away from me. By good luck I see that the largest bull, and another good one, with two full-grown cows, are running on the outside, and consequently nearest to me. This gives me my opportunity, and spurting up abreast of them, before the horse has fairly stopped I am on the ground; but instead of giving me a broad-side shot, the old bull swerves suddenly and gets the bullet somewhere near the root of the tail, which he acknowledges in the usual manner by kicking out smartly with his hind legs. One of the cows crossing behind him, I give her a shot in the



“I gallop up on the off side of the remainder of the troop.”

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small ribs, aiming for the heart. She reduces her speed at once, but still keeps on after the rest. Telling Muntumuni now to cut in below them, which he does very smartly—causing the rest of the troop to swerve to the left, where they split up into little groups—I now easily head the four in the direction of camp, race them through another strip of bush in which the two cows turn out, and again ride into them on the other side. Muntumuni at once turns out with the cows, so as to keep the wounded one in sight, as she still holds on, always in the direction of camp, so I am left with the two bulls. The smaller of these is not at all satisfied with the arrangement, and attempts to turn out and leave the old patriarch to run alone to the bitter end. With lengthened strides the would-be deserter tries to cross my front, so pulling in, I give him a shot, broadside, through the shoulder: he instantly slackens speed to a walk, and just as I am about to give him a shot in the head, he staggers, stands tremblingly for a moment, and then falls dead.

I now set out after the big bull first hit, who is going away strongly some 300 yards distant, and after a sharp burst I again range up and give him a second shot; but it is badly placed, as the low bush is very thick just here, and only partially burnt, and the bull runs in a most erratic manner through it, twisting and turning about in all directions. For this same reason I am unable to get alongside, but as soon as the bull leaves the bush and turns down-hill, over some very rough stony ground, I once more let out: he now slows down, and I can see that his race is run, though I have no suspicion that mine is in imminent danger of being run also. We are almost alongside, another couple of lengths will do it, when a huge ant-bear hole confronts us: a magnificent effort and the brave old horse clears it in his stride, but again landing on stones, hidden in the ashy dust, slips, half recovers, only to find himself in another yawning hole, the ground being completely burrowed out all round. We are not long in parting company: Moscow turns a complete somersault, whilst I fly yards over his head, and come down a regular crowner. My plucky nag soon rises and shakes himself, but for a few moments I cannot do the one, and do not need to do the other, it having been already well done for me. However, after a little star-gazing, I get on my feet, a distressful figure,

with blood running freely from nose and forehead into my ash-choked mouth. Fortunately my rifle is safe, though sorely dented on the stones, and, to my surprise, I see the old bull standing about 60 yards away, looking on in wonderment at the performance. But, poor brute! I can tell by the swaying neck, the trembling knees, and the slackly-hanging tail that his end is near. Through no fault of his, driven from that happy valley where he had but wished to live in harmless quiet, it was hard thus to be chased to a cruel death, and merely to gratify my love of "sport." Think you that if at that moment I could have given his life back, the last fatal shot would ever be fired? A thousand times no; I honestly felt at that moment that I would have smashed my rifle there and then to fragments on the stones, if I could have said, "Go free and unhurt; and though we often meet again, never shall rifle of mine be raised against you!" And only five minutes before, I had been so eager for his death that I ran risk of meeting mine in compassing it! But why should I try to excuse myself? Why do deliberate, premeditated harm first, and then wish it undone? No, excuses avail nothing,—at least do not offer them as excuses—it is unmanly.

"Better not do the deed, than weep it done."

Flash such thoughts through my mind as I walk with unsteady steps towards my victim. Not a movement betrays him, save a sickening tremor of the muscles that tells of the mighty strength fast leaving him: the great lustrous eyes are suffused with tears, which drop quickly on to the ashy ground beneath; a sharp report, his legs are swept, as it were, from under him, and with a great crash he falls lifeless to the ground. And the lengthening shadows fall across his once glossy hide; the sun that from the east to its zenith shone upon him full of joyous life and mighty strength, now in the west, casts its red beams where he lies stiff and cold in death!

I hung some grass up to keep away the vultures, and then struck off to where I had crossed through the second belt of trees to see if I could hit off the spoor of the wounded cow and of my after-rider, and had not ridden over 200 yards when I saw Muntumuni in the distance busy dragging some bushes along, and I knew he was with the dead cow: if further evidence had

been wanted, it was afforded by the whirling flight of the expectant vultures sailing in mazy circles overhead. He told me the two cows ran together for a little; but the wounded one soon stood, and he killed it with a shot in the head.

I cannot speak too highly of Muntumuni's capabilities as an after-rider, or indeed as an all-round, plucky, skilful, and reliable hunting companion. Scarcely anything excites him, whereas excitability is too often the great fault with otherwise perfectly reliable boys. The only occasion upon which I have ever seen him thoroughly roused to a pitch of excitement was the day when he and an old boar bush-pig went over a steep bank together, as related in the earlier portion of this work; but he was quite a lad then, and there was ample cause for excitement. Keen and watchful as he is, nothing escapes his vigilance; and I have never seen his equal on spoor or at finding his way back to camp. True to his Swazi traditions, he is utterly fearless, and in the saddle, in the heat of the chase, values his neck at a very low figure.

One little incident bearing upon this is worth relating. He was up on a good shooting-horse of mine—a nag with a great turn of speed—whilst I was riding an altogether indifferent performer, though a good stayer. We had ridden some distance, and were about to off-saddle on the edge of a thick bush of considerable extent. I had, in fact, already dismounted and walked to a tree a few yards off to lay my rifle against it, leaving my nag standing, when the boy drew my attention to a couple of cheeta about 150 yards distant. They were walking one behind the other out of some long grass towards the bush, on the edge of which they stood and turned to look at us. Unfortunately the scrub was thick, and I could not see them distinctly enough to get a shot, so ran forward, leaving my horse; but they jumped into the bush before I was ready. The boy brought my horse up to me, and we cantered down towards the spot, though scarcely expecting to find them again, but to our surprise we saw them jump off through the bush just in front of us. We at once let out in pursuit, but perhaps the less said about that run the better. They led us through some—well, never mind. I wanted some more suggestive words than "thick scrub," but they will do; and, to aid the understanding, will say that it was

so bad that first the crown of my felt hat, then my coat, and afterwards my shirt left me, my torn and ragged breeches alone held, and all the time, whilst my eyes were not otherwise engaged assisting arms to ward off the thorny branches, they rested upon the dusky form of my companion, who was doing his best to give me a lead. He had started clothed in his own skin and a very ragged pair of "breeks," and now had but a portion of the former and a few tattered shreds of the latter left; but his horse still carried him over, round, or through holes, stumps, trees, and bushes, his voice at times reaching me distinctly as he rose over some obstacle, at others muffled as he found himself in a like position to that in which I frequently was—diving through some thick and obstinately yielding thorn-bush—"There they are! They're going to stand. Come on, sir: there's a chance!" How the mischief ever he saw them at all beats me; for I can conscientiously say that I did not once set eyes upon them after entering the bush.

He seemed to think it good fun, too, judging by the aggravating grin which overspread his face, torn and bleeding like mine, after we had given up the pursuit, his only remark being, "Mai-ba-be, 'tihlahla leti!" which may be translated, "Alas, those bushes!" And he had lost his near stirrup-leather and broken the iron (a brass one) upon the off-side early in the run; while I am afraid I lost my shirt (we recovered the back and one sleeve of my tweed coat), my temper, and the two largest cheeta I ever had the luck to drop across.

Hunting giraffe on foot is not, as a rule, a very successful method of procedure. They are naturally, owing to their great height, and consequently wide field of vision, very difficult to stalk; and even if one comes up to a troop, the chances are he must be content to take whatever shot offers, regardless of age, size, or sex. Although I have tried many times to stalk them in bush-country, sometimes armed with a camera, at others with a rifle, I have never yet succeeded in getting within range unseen. I have shot them thus, but success has entirely depended upon the fact that giraffes stand looking so long at any object they cannot make out properly; and, generally speaking, they are far more suspicious of any one on foot than of a mounted man. The most successful attempt, I think, which

I ever made was one afternoon when camped on the Mjindana river. We sighted seven giraffe in some fairly thick bush, and as we were apparently not discovered, stalked in on them, covering the first 400 yards easily enough. Crawling about in such country is not by any means conducive to personal comfort, over ground peppered with fallen thorns and growing thorns from an eighth of an inch in length to eight inches; straight, crooked, and barbed thorns, single thorns and double thorns—in fact, thorns of all possible shapes and sizes, and each vying with the other in the virulence of the poison exuded. Then the grass-seeds! Have not the terrors of these insignificant-looking products of vegetation been chronicled again and again? Down one's neck, into eyes, mouth, and shirt-front, and, worst of all, into the waist-band! But when excitement keeps one going, the reckoning with these things does not come till afterwards.

The giraffe were feeding very leisurely about, though not moving perceptibly forwards, but keeping in much about the same area, where they had evidently found some choice pickings. When about 300 yards distant, we again obtained a good view of them, and made out a young one previously overlooked, making up the number to eight. Another 50 yards' crawling still lower on the ground, literally *ventre-à-terre*, and as I raised my hatless head over the grass-tops, behind a small scraggy thorn-bush, I saw a young bull gazing very steadily in our direction. He was not alarmed, evidently, as the others were not taking the slightest notice; still he was suspicious, and suspicion and alarm are ever near neighbours in the minds of wild game. We lay still as mice for fully a quarter of an hour, and at last had the satisfaction of seeing this inquisitive young bull turn away, facing up-hill, when again we moved forward. Here the ubiquitous "coly" thought well to interfere, a couple of these annoying birds perching on a thorn-tree to our right, and calling to us in searching mocking tones to "Go 'way, go 'way, go 'wa-a-ay!" The Boers call these birds *kwa-vogel* (kwa-bird), in reference to their cry. However, we did not recognise their right of interference, and as the giraffes either did not hear or did not care to take the hint, we kept going, more cautiously than ever. Two hundred yards now, and another look; still all quiet, but the young bull had moved off to a solitary thorn-tree on our right, and a fine large cow with a calf had

approached somewhat nearer, and was daintily clipping a few light sprays from the very top of a widespreading acacia. The bull again looked towards us, but in a careless undecided manner, as though it were a final glance before casting aside all his former suspicions. Hot and itching, we again advanced, making for a little low bush that I judged to be about 120 yards from the nearest of the giraffe. Keeping this bush in front of us, and while yet 20 yards from it, we had another look, and to our dismay found that the whole troop was quietly watching us, doubtless amused at the thought that we imagined ourselves unseen. We were in an awkward position, the only clear shot well within range being at the young bull, now standing a little over 100 yards away. There was no chance of moving to pick out another, so whispering to Muntumuni, "I'll take the young bull," and receiving a grin and a nod in reply, I raised the rifle cautiously, and was in the act of sighting on the bull's chest, when my attention was drawn elsewhere by receiving a tap on the boot from Muntumuni, who was lying flat on the grass behind and a little to one side of me. As I turned round quickly to see what it was—knowing full well he never gives a false alarm—my eyes rested upon the forms of two splendid giraffe, an old light-coloured bull and a very dark cow, in the act of struggling to their feet, from some long grass, and behind a thickish patch of low thorn-bush, not more than 60 or 70 yards distant to my right, and almost abreast of us. Simultaneously with my sudden movement, the whole troop began to move off, screwing up their black-tasselled tails over their haunches, and evidently bent upon increasing the distance between us as rapidly as possible. Naturally I turned my attention to the two largest, but for a moment was unable to get a chance at either, as the young bull that had come so near to getting a bullet deliberately crossed in front of me; but as the old bull wheeled round and presented his broadside as he strode off in the direction taken by the troop, I gave him the right barrel,—he ran 20 yards and fell dead. The cow turned short to the right, and joined the young bull, which was endeavouring to recross behind us: I gave her the other barrel in the small ribs at an angle,—she ran 200 yards and toppled over dead, the 2½-ounce bullet having passed through her heart. The bull

got the bullet through both lungs, and the off-side shoulder was broken.

I cannot understand why it was those two giraffe allowed us to approach so closely before getting up, especially after we were discovered by every other member of the troop; nor how we failed to notice their long necks up above the grass. Is it possible they lie down at full length at times, with their long necks stretched out along the ground? I certainly never heard of them indulging in this form of siesta, but an examination of the spot upon which they were lying certainly pointed to that conclusion.

I lost a fine chance at lions next morning at the bull's carcass, through the infernal stupidity of some Shanganas. They joined us at camp that evening, and asked for some meat, which they were willing to pay for—nominally—in tobacco, of which commodity we were all running short; so I agreed to let them accompany us next day, and take away the meat of the old bull. Upon reaching the spot we went to the cow first, which my boys proceeded to skin, while I directed the others to where the bull lay, not more than 350 yards distant, telling them they were to skin it and carry the hide to camp in two halves. As they approached the carcass they saw four lions, or rather a lion and three lionesses, get up from behind a bush near by and quietly walk off; and yet these idiots never either called to us or sent one of their number to tell us, and it was not till an hour after, when I went over to see how they were getting along, that I knew anything about it. They came very near to having the pleasure of seeing the vultures eat their meat: it was not the thought of the tobacco that restrained me from permitting this, but of the great waste of meat. We spent the remainder of that day trying to get the spoor out, but without success, nor did the lions return to that portion of the carcass which I left as bait.

I could multiply incidents of giraffe-hunting, of runs good, bad, and indifferent; but to me it is not a particularly pleasant topic, and if, after reading this brief recital, you still ask me "Why?" I can only say, "Come out and try for yourself," and if you are a true sportsman the pleading helplessness of your victims will suffice, and you will admit "True, 'tis pity"!

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE LOW-COUNTRY LEOPARDS.

Remarks—The victim of a chance shot—Visitors—Lion or leopard?—A vegetable horror—Blue-lights for night-shooting—Vocal harmony—Night sounds deceptive—A pair of leopards—A little “bounce”—Lighting up—Beautiful effect—A fine chance—I go aloft—Not to be done out of her supper—The eyes of the *Felidæ* at night—Cubs—Fall asleep—A good specimen—Hyæna shot—Follow the wounded one—Found—A bull’s eye—Nocturnal habits—Through dense bush—Drift-making—Five miles in four days—Fatal delay—A scuffle—Rover—Camp on the Mjindana—News of a leopard—*Vlak-vark*—Take up the scent—A Stygian pool—Further evidence—An exciting moment—Escape by the pool—The leopard returns—A beat—Escape again—Watching for hippo—Another beat arranged—At bay in a palmite jungle—Close quarters—A miss-fire—“The dogs are in!”—Safe—Retrace our steps—“I lele!”—“I file”—A fine male—Measurements—Leopards as swimmers—Deserved to escape—Wildebeeste—A call to arms—Leopard seen—Organise a beat—“Kuwe, bans!”—A miss—In the reeds—First blood—Where is he?—“Fever-trees”—On the safe side—A charge—A lucky shot—Success—A waterbuck bull—Vultures—How did they get in?—A taste for botany—Leopard escapes—“Dead off!”—A leopard cub—A shot at a leopardess—Searching for the cub—Run to earth—Digging him out—Cheetas numerous—Great speed—“Nanti ’tilwana!”—Measurements of male cheeta—A word for the leopard—Plenty of fun for your money—Rare trophies.

It would be quite impossible within the space of a volume like this—which only purports to contain a series of sketches descriptive of the pursuit of some of the game best known or most frequently met with in a certain district of the hunting-veldt—to treat fully of all the *feræ naturæ* which might come under the sportsman’s notice; but being desirous that the description of

such as I have selected as typical forms shall be as complete as possible, I feel that further reference to the leopard is desirable, as in the first part of the work only the variety found in the hill country has been described, with a brief passing allusion to that of the Low Country, for the sake of comparison. And though I hold firmly to the opinion that all leopards found in different parts of the world—varying though they do in size, shape, and coloration—are modifications of but one widely distributed species, still the nature of the sport varies according to the conditions obtaining in that district where they are hunted; so that a further brief recital, showing how in the Low Country this ever-fascinating sport may be enjoyed, seems not out of place.

Having already given a description of the animal itself in the first part of this work, and compared it with that of the hill country, I will at once proceed to narrate some incidents connected with its pursuit, from which a further insight into its habits may be obtained.

On the night of August 8, 1890, I had a somewhat novel adventure with a couple of these beautiful animals. Two days previously I had been out with a companion, and had badly wounded an ostrich, one of a small coterie of five birds. It fell, but rose again to its feet and staggered off while my attention was occupied by the other birds, and though we searched high and low, never saw it again—because, owing to an extensive grass-fire that was rapidly coming down on us, we were obliged to beat a hasty retreat. All this preface may seem scarcely pertinent to the subject, but it was whilst riding away from this fire that we noticed a few vultures hovering in an uncertain manner above a spot higher up on the ridge than where we rode; and thinking it was just possible they had the wounded bird in sight, we went over, only to find a young wildebeeste bull, recently dead—evidently one of a troop that had been wounded, but had got away and died. We made a hole in the entrails to permit the scent the more quickly to reach the nostrils of any prowling lion or leopard that might be near at hand, and covered the carcass up. Nothing came during the night, however, but on the morning of the 8th Muntumuni and I were up there early; but our early was too late for a shot, for though the carcass had been visited, the visitors had departed. The ground

was very hard and stony, and the spoor consequently indistinct, so that we could not decide as to whether two young lions or a pair of leopards had been the fortunate or unfortunate discoverers. Neither could we decide by the appearance of the carcass: it had been dragged under a bush some yards away from where we left it, disembowelled, and the entrails partially buried, the viscera eaten, and also some flesh—perhaps 20 lb. weight—from the haunches. Portion of the breast-bone was also devoured; but the strongest argument in favour of the visitors being leopards was the fact that, although we had reached the spot at early dawn, they had already left, whereas, had they been lions, they would probably still have been at the carcass.

There was nothing for it but to sit for them that night, so we again covered up the carcass, and proceeded to select a good place from which to watch. It was impossible to adopt my favourite plan of making a little *scherm* round a bush, for not only was there no suitable bush near, but we were quite unable to decide in what direction the animals had gone off, the only visible spoor being just round the carcass; but it was altogether lost in the ocean of long grass surrounding the spot. Eventually I decided upon one of the small thorn-trees scattered about at wide intervals upon the ridge where the carcass lay. None were over 12 feet in height, and all were as thorny as they are usually made in the Low Country. So there was little room for choice, and I selected the nearest, which almost overhung the carcass, an ungainly-looking specimen of a tree, in shape like a half-strung bow, and with long wicked-looking white thorns upon it, as self-assertive as the almonds in a tipsy-cake. To speak of comfortable seats upon this vegetable horror would be to suppose an impossibility. There was just one place on it slightly less uninviting than the rest, and this I chose.

It was my intention to experiment for the first time with some blue-lights—Brock's patent—which had been given to me by a friend, a keen sportsman, who was shooting in that district a season previous, and who had himself shot a lion at night by their aid. As the evening approached, a boy accompanied me to the chosen spot, carrying two blue-lights, my overcoat, a camp-stool, and a very diminutive flask of "P.C.C." I sent the boy back at once, and having put my coat up in the tree, took

my seat on the camp-stool at the foot, and against a small straggling bush which grew beneath it. The prospect of taking my seat amongst those thorns made me anxious to put off the evil day, and I was in no hurry to climb up: I reserved my hurry for a couple of hours later, when it became more necessary. For about an hour I sat thus smoking contemplatively—as I did not expect my visitors till nearly midnight—and during that time it grew quite dark. After a while a couple of spotted hyænas came along up the ridge, approaching cautiously, and every now and again treating me to a specimen of their vocal powers, which were considerable. I always think the unearthly howling shriek of these brutes is one of the most weird and startling sounds in creation. The knowledge of their cowardice and comparative harmlessness goes for nothing; the cry is there, and that is horrible enough in all conscience. Thinking it was about time to be getting on to my perch, I stood up, and at that moment fancied I heard something moving in the grass, a little distance away; then came a low grunt, repeated again after an interval, a little to the left of where I first heard it. I came to attention at once, puzzled to know from what creature the sounds proceeded. How easily one can be deceived at times by sounds in the bush! I knew this was no lion, nor did it sound in any way like the cry of a leopard: it more resembled the short grunt of wild-pigs than anything else, and I am certain that times out of number I have heard them make a similar noise. But I was not left long in doubt, for as I stood there listening attentively, and knowing that it was useless then to attempt to get up the tree, I heard the deep harsh Goom! goom!—that sound I knew so well—repeated first behind me, then in front; and I was aware that I had a pair of the spotted cats to deal with.

There was very little wind, merely a light cold air blowing from the north,—from me towards the camp. Evidently the leopards had not yet passed round on to that side; they kept more up on the ridge, moving backwards and forwards through the grass. They had not winded, but I felt sure they had seen me, and the probability of their approaching the carcass whilst I was there seemed very remote. However, there was no help for it, so I kept still, knowing that until I could satisfy myself

of their exact position, it was useless to strike the blue-light. I had placed it all ready in the little bush against which I stood, with the ignition-surface exposed, and the striker held in my hand. The night was intensely dark, but still I could make out the carcass of the wildebeeste showing up black in the surrounding grass. The leopards were evidently very suspicious of me and my intentions, and the excitement of thus waiting became almost insupportable; but at last one of them went to the carcass, and tore a little at it—though before I could take any action, it sprang away in the grass with a deep growl, and ran round in front of me. Again they tried the same tactics, till, after playing the fool thus for some time, without being able to force my hand, they took the initiative, and one of them determined on a closer inspection, or perhaps a little bounce. I could distinctly hear it advancing by the rustling sound in the dry grass, and at last could make out an indefinite shadow-like form, seemingly very close to me. My rifle was on full-cock, the striker at the head of the blue-light; the rustling ceased, and when next instant the light hissed into a flare, there was a short quick rush through the grass, to an accompaniment of deep coughing grunts, and then the light flared up its brightest, singeing some of the twigs around it. We seemed to stand in a little world of light, under a spectral glare that brought out every object, even to the smallest grass-blade, in strong relief, while beyond was nether gloom. The effect was novel and beautiful in the extreme, the position unaccountably exciting. Not 20 yards distant, in the full rays of the light—every mark on the body, the black jowl, and the long white whiskers showing clearly as if in daylight—stood the central figure, a splendid leopard, growling low and sullenly, one forefoot a little advanced, the tail twitching nervously, the head erect, and mouth slightly opened, while the opaline eyes gleamed with a look of concentrated earnestness, as if they sought to stare the light out. Just over on the dividing line, as it were, between light and gloom, I made out the form of the second leopard, standing under a little bush, broadside on, but also staring hard at the light. I lost no time; the sights on my rifle—a single Metford—showed out grandly, and aiming for the centre of the chest of the nearest leopard, pressed the trigger. An angry



"I saw the leopard clinging to an old dead branch of a tree-stump."

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grunt, a wild rush through the grass, apparently towards me, a yellow flash in the air, and next moment, by the uncertain expiring flame of the blue-light, I saw the leopard clinging to an old dead branch of a tree-stump, some 8 feet from the ground, and within 12 yards of the tree against which I stood. I lit up the second light at once, but ere it fairly blazed up, the leopard fell backwards with a dull thud on to the ground, amongst a shower of dead bark and dry sticks.

I looked quickly round for the other one, but could not make it out, though I fancied I could hear it grunting some distance off in the grass. Then as I considered I had done all that duty required of me below, I lost no time in getting up-stairs, as I felt rather creepy, now that the excitement was over, with a wounded leopard close to me in the grass, and his mate somewhere not far off. But even as I gained the forked branch, there was a quivering rustle in the long grass at the foot of the dead tree, a deep choking sigh, and I knew it was all over with one of them at least. For a couple of hours I watched in perfect silence, now and again fancying I could hear the leopardess approaching, but never certain, until suddenly I became aware that she was at the carcass. But it was no use; try how I might I could not see her, though now and then her glistening eyes would proclaim her whereabouts, but too uncertainly for a shot.

It is perhaps needless to remark here that the eyes of the *Felidæ* have no actual light-giving powers, and that it is quite a mistake to imagine that they "gleam" or "blaze" upon a dark night, unless they are actually turned towards some light. If one is below, or on a level even with, a lion or a leopard on a dark night, the eyes are quite invisible unless they are looking towards a fire; but if one is slightly above them, the reflection from even a starry sky causes them to scintillate with marvellous lustre whenever they glance upwards, and when looking into fire-light they gleam like two lamps.

It was most unfortunate that I had no more blue-lights, having used the only two I brought with me.

After the leopardess had been about half an hour at the carcass, I heard for the first time the yapping of some cubs—three, I should judge—which she chivied about all over the place, whenever, I suppose, they intruded upon her. But from first to last

she was most suspicious, constantly leaving the carcass and moving away through the grass; now and again walking round and round the spot where the dead one lay, uttering half-plaintive, half-defiant cries. I knew that my only chance—and that a poor one—was to await the dawn; but unluckily I managed to go off to sleep, and did not wake till it was light, and the leopardess had cleared off. I was then enabled to examine the one I had shot at leisure. He was a magnificent specimen, with an abnormally large heavy head. I had no tape-line with me, but roughly spanning his length, made it about 7 feet 3 inches or 7 feet 4 inches, and about 32 inches at the shoulder. The pegged-out skin measured 7 feet 10 inches. He was a typical Low Country animal—his hide, of a light buff-colour, very glossy, and in perfect condition, the rosette spots on the body being very clearly defined, and with no semblance of bars or lines in their formation. The head was the largest I have ever seen on a leopard, and the teeth long and perfect.

As I had instructed some boys to bring one of my horses up early, I set to work to remove the pelt at once, whilst waiting for them. I had made a lucky shot, the bullet having cut the main artery above the heart, entering at the point of the shoulder, so that the leopard must have moved slightly as I pulled the trigger. I had about half-skinned the beast, and was momentarily expecting the boys, when, glancing round, my attention was attracted by two objects skulking along some 300 yards distant on the edge of the patch of long grass in which I stood, and beyond which lay the fresh "brandt" made on the day we lost the ostrich. They were two large spotted hyænas, and as I wanted a good head, and could see at a glance these were fine big fellows, I took my rifle and carefully watched the direction in which they were going. Hitherto they had not seen me, but were moving along at an angle that must soon give them my wind. I let them cover another hundred yards or so, and, crouching down, ran out to cut them off. They stopped a second when they made me out, but started off again at a clumsy gallop, straight for the spot where I had been skinning the leopard. They then suddenly turned again short to the right, evidently scared at something—I fancy they had seen my overcoat hanging on a bush—and rushed past me at a distance of about 80 yards. I

fired at the foremost one, and broke his front leg low down, then hastily getting in another cartridge dropped number two in his tracks. The first one was going away hard on three legs, and I fired two more shots at him, but believed they missed; so I walked towards where the other lay growling and snapping in the grass, looking savage enough then as I approached. I soon finished him off, and then took the spoor of the one first wounded, following it out of the long grass on to the "brandt" for half a mile, and then, as he seemed still to have been going hard, gave it up, and returned to the leopard just as the boys came up with my horse. Then when we had finished skinning the two animals, we packed the skins on the horse and returned to camp.

The following day I went to the spot again to see if the leopardess had returned, but the carcass having been insufficiently covered up, the vultures had made a clean sweep of everything. Whilst riding over the "burn," in the direction in which I had followed the wounded hyæna the previous day, thinking I might possibly cut lion or leopard spoor by so doing, I noticed a brown object lying under a little thorn-bush, and on approaching found it was the identical beast I had wounded and given up. The front-leg was broken, and one or other of the last two shots I had fired at him was a bull's-eye, entering behind, and raking him, completely tearing his lungs, though he had run half a mile nearly after getting the bullet. I found my spoor of the day before within 50 yards, so had I gone on for another few minutes I would have found him dead. Both these hyænas were large full-grown males.

I had some very pretty sport with leopards during the season of 1891, being particularly lucky in coming across them. And luck always has a great deal to do with the matter where either lions or leopards are concerned, though finding them does not entirely depend upon mere chance. If one makes a point of searching for these animals alone, he will be surprised at the success that rewards his efforts, even in the daytime, but otherwise it is pure chance if one meets with them.

It is far more difficult to get a shot at leopards than at lions in the Low Country, for although both are nocturnal in their habits, the leopard is more especially so, not moving abroad till

long after lions, and always getting away early from a kill, whereas lions can usually be found at a carcass up to 7 A.M., and frequently lie by it all day. Then, again, the lion's voice is often a good guide as to his whereabouts, and I have shot them by being on the move at earliest dawn, particularly on damp misty mornings, and following them up by their voice. The superior size of the latter renders them less likely to be overlooked; for, after all, the largest leopard is but a small animal, especially when his terrible powers of destruction are taken into consideration.

Being late that year in starting for the hunting-veldt, I pushed on hard, trekking day and night where practicable, in order to make up for lost time. We took a line of country through which I had never previously passed, and never again desire to, as we got into such a labyrinth of rivers, streams, ugly dongas, water-courses, and densely wooded ridges, that at one time I almost despaired of ever getting out into fair travelling country. I was so fully occupied at the waggons that I had no time to hunt more than was absolutely necessary to secure enough meat for my numerous followers, human and canine,—for to keep them in meat means to keep them in good spirits. But there were a good many sable antelope and koodoo about, as well as a few eland, if I had only had the time to look them up. The most heart-breaking work of all was making the "drifts" across the stream and numerous sandy water-courses. We dared not move on, after once striking a spruit, to search for a better place at which to cross, for fear of entering some cul-de-sac, out of which it would have been killing work to extricate ourselves, so we had just to set-to and get across as best we could. Wherever we came on a spruit, there the drift had to be made, and the road in and out of it had to be fairly broad to allow for swinging the long spans of oxen. In one part, after four days' hard work, we found ourselves at the most five miles distant from the spot we had left on the morning of the first day. In that distance we had made no less than sixteen drifts, large and small—terribly hot work under a blazing sun, scratching up the baked earth with picks that were none too sharp, and almost with tooth and nail at times.

On the morning of June 6th, having made two drifts during the

early morning trek, we came to a third spruit, where the densely matted jungle, long grass interwoven with thorny creepers—amongst which grew stunted thorn-trees of every imaginable fantastic shape and form, and where lay great rain-sodden logs, heavy as lead, embedded in the earth—seemed to bar our farther progress. While all hands were working at cutting a drift, my veteran Rover put up a fine leopardess a little way down the creek, from a patch of bush into which she had dragged a reed-buck. She sprang up the opposite bank, and stopped an instant, as if uncertain which way to go, as she heard the cattle moving about above her, and fancied herself surrounded. Rover in his eagerness tumbled over the bank on to the sand below, and for a moment I saw her glance down at the old dog; but it was a fatal delay on her part, for I fired at once, catching her rather high and far back, the Metford hollow bullet raking her lungs and smashing the fore-shoulder. With a hoarse grunt she reared up and fell sideways over the bank, almost on top of Rover, who promptly seized her by the neck. It was lucky for him that I was ready with another cartridge, or he might have fared ill; as it was, the leopard clawed his ear somewhat severely, though of that the plucky old fellow took not the slightest notice. He has been a good friend to me, that old dog; for, rain and shine, he has followed his master's wanderings for over twelve years, and with lions, leopards, and bush-pig has had such an exciting time of it that he has lived twenty years of ordinary dog-life in that period. This leopardess was in prime condition and very fat, her length from nose to tail-tip 6 feet 6 inches.

On July 13 I was camped with a light tent-waggon on the north bank of a considerable tributary of the Mabutsha river, called locally the Mjindana. My headquarters were on the former river, whence I had made several short trips about the country after game. I had met with fine varied sport—though lions, which I was most particularly in search of, had kept out of my way, notwithstanding the persistent efforts of my hunting Kafirs and myself to spoor them down. Having heard them for several nights in succession in the neighbourhood of the Mjindana, I had brought a light waggon over and camped on the banks, whence we scoured the country around for these wandering creatures, but without success. Four of them visited the

locality whilst we were camped there, but they would none of our baits, letting them all severely alone.

One Sunday evening, about 9 P.M., two boys who had been down to the junction of the Mabutsha and Mjindana, returned with news that a hippopotamus was in a large "hole" near that place, and distant about ten miles. They also stated that they had put up a leopard—a particularly large one—close to the hole in which they had seen the seacow; and they did not think it had left the palmite jungle on the river-bank into which it had retreated. It was of no use to move that night; but we at once got everything ready for an early start at daybreak, and on the following morning, just as day broke, we got under way. We had some difficulty in getting the span of donkeys—it was suspected "fly-country," so I had left the oxen at the main camp and substituted donkeys—to face a very nasty muddy drift of the river; but as soon as they were through, I went ahead with my after-rider and a couple of boys on foot. Soon after we saw a fine old wart-hog boar, standing broadside on under a little patch of burnt-out bush, about 150 yards distant. As I dismounted he whisked round and made off, tail on end, after the manner of his kind; but a bullet followed him, entering behind and passing clean through him; but even with that he gave me a smart 300 yards' run before I brought him to a standstill, and the boys finished him with their assegais. He carried a fine head, the measurement outside the jaws of the upper tusk being 9 inches, of the lower $6\frac{1}{2}$ inches, and $11\frac{1}{2}$ inches between the tips.

Leaving one of the boys to attract the attention of those at the waggon, I walked on ahead, leading my horse. I selected a spot for a camp when we reached the junction of the rivers, and leaving Muntumuni in charge of the horses, and to show the driver where to outspan, walked down to the river with May, the boy who had first seen the leopard, and soon found the spoor distinctly imprinted in the damp sand upon the water's edge. I at once remarked a far from savoury odour pervading the place; so taking up the scent, we proceeded a few yards along the bank, then crept most cautiously into a dense mass of reeds and *debris* washed up by the river at flood-time, and through which innumerable paths had been made by the hippos and game visiting the river to drink. The streams narrowed here to a

breadth of less than a dozen yards, flowing swiftly over a stony bottom; but a few yards above was an enormous pool—or “sea-cow hole” as they are called—fully a mile in length, and as deep for aught I know, and alive with crocodiles. A deadly-looking place, with great water-lilies covering its surface scum, amongst the broad leaves of which ever and anon some huge siluroid fish would poke up its smooth, round, ungainly head; where water-snakes wriggled unconcernedly from bank to bank, and great tortoises splashed into the dark stagnant waters when disturbed upon the reedy shores; where loathsome crocodiles floated listlessly on the surface, or lay with their great scaly heads amongst the vegetation on the brink, the rest of their bodies remaining submerged, watching for some doomed creature to come to drink that they might drag it struggling and crying into their noisome dens, scooped out under the overhanging banks. Great trees lined these banks, and combined with the general tangle of bush and reeds to shut out the genial sunlight from this horrible spot, whence even the troops of huge baboons would hurry in affright as they detected the presence of the crouching leopard, or of the scale-armed monsters in the silent pool.

It was a most ticklish place to creep into, but as the scent was very warm we pushed on. Some animal had evidently been killed and dragged, and soon we found a number of bones lying close to the bank, and a quantity of hair and other matter, the remains of some luckless koodoo. From this spot, however, the leopard had again dragged the carcass, or what remained of it—probably on the previous day, after being seen by the boys—and we took the spoor on to where the carcass had been hauled through the river, at a place narrow but swift. Carrying my rifle now on full-cock, we advanced carefully, scanning every foot of the matted jungle in front. The odour from the decaying vegetation and from the carcass, as well as that unmistakable one from the leopard himself, was horrible; and as I crept along, the water—which had run into my boots whilst wading the stream—made a most uncanny *squelching* sound that startled me more than once. I do not know how it is with others, but under such circumstances it is nothing but the intense excitement that keeps me going: but for that I should clear out from such a place in less than no time. But it was not to last much

longer, for after traversing another 50 yards in this way, and when it became evident that we were approaching the other edge of the jungle, our progress was arrested by a low grating growl to our right front, followed by a gentle rustling of the dead leaves which hung down in clusters round the palmito stems. I knelt down, with May close behind me, and we stared into the gloomy jungle which surrounded us as earnestly as if our lives depended upon it; but after that one low growl all was silent, so again crouching low we moved on straight for the spot whence the sounds had proceeded. Suddenly we heard a dull splash in the dark pool, a slight rippling sound, and again—silence. The proprietor of the show had left. Incredible as it may seem, the leopard, having silently crossed our front,—he could not have been more than 12 yards distant,—had deliberately entered the pool and swam across.

But we were to witness more astonishing things yet before we finished with that brute. Almost at once, and ere a sigh of relief escaped us, my eyes fell on the remains of the kill—a koodoo cow; but as the jungle was so thick, neither I nor my plucky boy deemed it at all advisable to pursue our explorations further. The cause of our excitement being gone, the reaction set in, and we were only too anxious to scramble out of that vile den as quickly as possible, our self-respect alone preventing the retreat from becoming positively undignified. But we dragged the carcass out with us, and placed it in a patch of thick grass skirting the jungle, at a spot, as we afterwards found, less than 200 yards from our camp—we having described a half-circle in the bush, and again emerged not far from where we had entered it. On returning, we found the waggon outspanned, and breakfast ready; and it did not take me long, after a good wash, to set to.

An hour later, I started with my gang to get everything ready at the seacow hole, in which we believed we had the hippo fixed, as we could not see any outgoing spoor. So we intended to stop up all the paths leading in and out, with the exception of one, at which I purposed watching, and as on the way down to the pool we should have to pass close to the spot where we had placed the carcass, I walked quietly in advance with a boy to see that it was all right, and to throw a little more grass over it, to keep it from the watchful eyes of the circling vultures. I

have no doubt it *was* all right, in the opinion of the owner—at all events he had done his best to make it so, for when we approached the spot we found the carcass had gone! It was a daring act, for the brute had actually returned in broad daylight, and again dragged it away from a place within earshot of our camp. I was on my mettle, but felt the inutility of again attempting to creep into the jungle—it was creepy work in two senses—so on reaching the pool I at once set the gang to work, and after seeing everything fairly started, returned with three of my Swazi boys to beat out the strip of jungle with the dogs. I stationed myself in the leopard's run, by way of which it had first retreated when the boys saw it, as it seemed more than probable it would attempt the same tactics again, there being another very extensive tract of jungle lower down the river, where it would be certain of finding secure shelter. The boys entered at the upper end of the strip, and beat down towards me. A quarter of an hour afterwards came a bark from one of the dogs, answered by a growl from the leopard, which appeared to be about midway between the beaters and myself; then the other dogs joined in chorus as they rushed up to the scene of action, and for the space of several minutes there was a fine commotion in the jungle. Finger on trigger, I carefully watched the bush in front of me, the opening in which I stood being a very narrow one—so much so, in fact, that had the leopard or leopards come along my way, they would have been within 10 yards before I could see them, which would give me none too much time for a shot. At last I again heard the ominous splash in the pool, followed by a second, and then a whining chorus from the dogs, distinctly expressive of their disappointment. It was easy to divine what had happened: the leopards—for there were evidently two of them, as I had begun to suspect—had made their escape by again swimming across to the other bank in preference to stealing away through the jungle.

The beat was a failure from want of boys, as it was evidently necessary to cut off the retreat of the leopards by way of the pool. We might have taken up the spoor on the opposite bank by crossing the river lower down; but as I had other matters to attend to, and felt certain the brutes would again return, I decided to leave them alone for the present, and have another

try to beat them out next day with all hands. However, we hunted up the remains of the koodoo—now consisting of little more than the dirty hide and a few half-picked bones, which the leopard had dragged but a very little way into the jungle—and again placed them outside. I watched by the sea-cow hole that night—it was not more than 300 yards distant from where the leopards had their kill—but the hippo did not put in an appearance. I several times heard the leopards, however, uttering their skirring, grating growl; and then, as they approached the kill and found it again removed outside the bush, their deeper “goom, goom” sounded very distinctly through the still night-air. At dawn I returned to the waggon and had some coffee, intending to lie down for an hour before the great heat of the day, while the boys got their breakfast, and made ready for the beat. While they were cutting some grass for my shake-down, I took my rifle and a few cartridges, and calling my two best dogs, Rover and Bushman, strolled down to the river to enjoy a quiet smoke, and see what the leopards had done with the carcass. As I before mentioned, a narrow strip of grass, perhaps an acre in extent, bordered the palmite jungle, and thinking this might possibly afford the leopards too good a chance of escape when their retreat by the river-bank was cut off, I threw in a match to burn it off. It was rather damp, and burned slowly; so taking a handful of dry grass, I started along the edge, burning as I went, when suddenly I heard a bark from one of the dogs, whose absence I had not noticed—not a good hearty bark, but a smothered sort of sound, suggestive of unwillingness on the part of the barker to exert himself; then followed two or three sharp excited barks from little Bushman, evidently backing up his old father. I knew in an instant what was up, and resolved to have a try alone to come to terms with these impudent brutes, one or both of which I felt certain my dogs were holding at bay. Running down the slight declivity, I saw a narrow opening in the palmite jungle, and crept in, not without some misgivings on the score of my rifle, which had taken to missing fire so repeatedly. I had to creep along on all-fours, but had not gone 20 yards when I came quite suddenly on the big cat, lying crouched under a palmite clump whose fronds hung over its back, its head just raised a few inches from the ground,

its ivories glistening between the twitching lips that were drawn back into a snarl, its right paw slightly extended and resting upon the remains of the koodoo, and the long lithe tail jerking and rustling nervously from side to side amongst the dead leaves. Rover stood in front of him, barking at intervals, and evidently wondering what kept his master so long. Bushman I could not see, but his sharp bark rang out through the jungle from somewhere on the other side of the leopard. The latter was about a dozen yards away, lying rather less than three-quarters from me,



"Instantly the leopard sprang to its feet."

evidently not troubling himself much about the dogs, and determined not to give up his dinner to them though they barked all day.

As I raised my rifle, still keeping in a crouching position to see under the leaves, some sharp needle-pointed fronds of the palmite rustled loudly: the leopard heard it at once, and turned its head towards me with a most wicked snarl, raising it considerably at the same time. The touch on the trigger only produced a sharp "click," and instantly the leopard sprang to its feet, facing me,

holding its head low, and looking anything but amiable. But for the presence of the dogs, I am almost sure the brute would have come for me; and even as it was, the recollection of my scuffle in the bush nearly three years previously came forcibly to my mind. Rover, however, who now saw me, rushed gallantly in; the leopard crouched lower, raising its paw as if to strike the dog, and even then another miss-fire would have been awkward, to say the least, if only for Rover's sake, but the report rang out sharply and loudly in the dark stuffy jungle-opening. I dived sideways under the leaves, and for some minutes could see nothing for the cloud of smoke hanging round; but I heard a deep stifled roar, a mad rush through the bush, and again a splash in the seacow hole. Then a put-out sort of a yelp from Rover,—a second and a third splash in the horrible pool! "Heavens, the dogs are in!" I thought, with a feeling of sickening dread,—for Rover is as dear to me as my right hand,—and I struggled through the jungle to the edge of the bank. As I reached it, I saw the two dogs climbing out on the other side, and my mind thus relieved, I "cooeyed" loudly to the boys at the waggon. My three plucky Swazis had anticipated me, for as I again emerged from the jungle I saw them with guns and assegais in hand racing down the slope to see who could reach me first.

What had become of the leopard was a mystery: surely I had not missed him, almost at the gun-muzzle; and yet why had the dogs swam across? I could only conclude that, being wounded, perhaps but slightly, he had crossed over, and they had followed him through the pool. So we all ran together down to the lower drift, splashed through the water, and kept up along the other bank till we were about abreast of the spot where I had fired at the leopard. We saw nothing of the dogs, but after careful search struck the fresh spoor of a leopard, and shortly afterwards that of my dogs running upon it. There was no blood to be seen, and as I was almost certain I had hit the brute, the only conclusion we could arrive at was that the wounded one had jumped away in the jungle, and the dogs in following him had put up another, which took to the water, and drew the dogs on in pursuit. When at last the latter turned up wet through and panting heavily, we were confirmed in this opinion, as Rover

would never leave a wounded leopard ; and this, as we afterwards ascertained, was exactly what had occurred.

We now retraced our steps down-stream, intending to re-cross and re-enter the jungle from the other side, and take up the spoor of the wounded animal ; but when we came to the spot where the dogs swam over, and were looking searchingly into the dark jungle across the pool, one of the boys suddenly said, "Nansiya, baas ; i lele !" ("There it is, sir ; it's lying down !") After a good deal of pointing and excited whisperings, I made it out apparently crouched under a mass of driftwood and other *débris*, its round head and little ears being distinctly visible. Twice I pulled trigger and the cartridge failed to explode, so I told one of the boys to fire. The bullet struck a little short, sending up a cloud of dusty dead leaves close to the brute's head. But it was all that was necessary : with a wild shout, "I file !" ("It is dead !") my companions **rushed off**, crossed the river, and dived into the jungle ; and when I, who took it more leisurely, arrived on the scene, I heard their eager voices talking as only Kafirs can talk under such circumstances, and found **them** sitting round the dead body of a very fine old male leopard. My bullet had entered the neck on the left side, slightly grazing the left ear, and passed along the neck, under the vertebræ, smashing the opposite fore-shoulder, the butt remaining in the skin of the shoulder. He had dashed off on getting the shot, and fallen dead on the very edge of the pool : the dogs excitedly rushing in pursuit put up another, probably the leopardess, and without hesitation jumped into the river after it, regardless of the scaly monsters hidden in those Stygian waters.

The male proved to be an exceptionally fine specimen, measuring 7 feet 7 inches from nose to tail-tip, running the tape along the curves of the back,—in a straight line between two assegaïs, 6 feet 11 inches ; height at shoulder 2 feet 9 inches, girth of forearm $11\frac{1}{2}$ inches. The teeth were long and in perfect condition. The other leopard I never saw again, at any rate not in or near that bush.

It is a singular thing that these leopards should have so unhesitatingly taken to the water, and on several occasions crossed it without being attacked by the crocodiles : perhaps they had some treaty of peace between themselves, whereby it was agreed

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ourselves a long, arduous, and—without dogs, for they had remained at the waggon—probably unsuccessful search, it was absolutely necessary that the retreat of the leopard up-stream towards the dense palmite jungle, in which I had shot the other, should be cut off, if indeed he had not already gone away in that direction. So I instructed the boys to go well up, fully 200 yards above the place at which the leopard had entered the bush, and if they did not see its spoor heading up-stream, to beat down towards me. Although I did not expect the brute would attempt to cross the open ground beyond the river, I posted a boy, who could use a gun decently, on the other side about abreast of where the wildebeeste lay, and a little below the spot at which they had marked the leopard enter the bush; while I took a turn down-stream, and climbed on to a large boulder near the bank, which commanded a fine view of the surrounding ground.

A small tributary with bush-lined banks, and thick tall reeds growing in it, joined the main stream just below, and looked to me a very likely spot for the leopard to make for. The boys entered the bush shouting lustily. Ten minutes—a quarter of an hour—twenty minutes,—and the boy whom I had posted across the river called out excitedly “Nansiya!” then, running down the bank a little way, took aim quickly and fired. As I stood, with both barrels cocked, looking up-stream, and carefully watching the bush upon my side, the boy shouted, “Kuwe, kuwe, baas!” (“Towards you, sir!”), and almost at once I saw the leopard cross over a narrow stony place and enter the reeds and bush on the other side. There was no time for a shot; but I stood fast, as the leopard was coming right down towards me. Then the shouts of the beaters sounded nearer and clearer, warning the leopard to move on; and again I caught sight of its yellow body, as it crept along under the bank in some old grass, about 70 yards distant. I would have done better by waiting till it was abreast of me before firing; but not knowing at what moment it might leave the bank of the river and seek safety on the opposite side, I took the chance when I could. It was a clean miss, when I certainly should have hit. Probably I did not hold steady, as the old gun is uncommonly good up to 80 yards—though sometimes there is no accounting for the vagaries in the flight of a spherical bullet beyond 50 yards. The leopard

growled low, jumped forward in the bush, then stood, possibly watching me, though it was quite hidden from view. I jumped down off the rock at once, and ran my hardest down-stream towards the reedy spruit above mentioned, thinking to cross it, and stand in the angle between it and the main stream. But the leopard was too quick for me; for when I got down into the spruit, keeping about 30 yards above the junction, and was forcing my way backwards through the reeds by pressing them down with my weight, the devil got out, almost from under my feet as it seemed, grunting viciously. It scared me for the moment; and it was lucky he was not wounded, or I should have been in a fix—the reeds being so thick the gun could not have been used with any effect. That is the worst of a leopard: one never knows where he is, and it is impossible to be too cautious in entering any cover where he may by any chance be concealed. Suddenly surprised in such a case, he would, if wounded, undoubtedly charge at once; and though I have never heard of such happening, I believe that even if unwounded, and any one coming suddenly on him—when he had been driven from pillar to post by beaters—were to turn to run, he would stand a fair chance of having the leopard on his shoulders.

The brute sprang up the bank down which I had clambered, and, when on top, turned up the smaller stream, giving me a broadside shot at about 20 yards. I hit him hard, tumbling him over, growling and swearing at a great rate, into the bush. I then found I had business elsewhere—a wounded leopard not being a desirable companion in thick reeds. My boys had by this time advanced to the edge of the other bank, upon which the leopard had been when I fired; so I shouted to them not to come any farther till I had endeavoured to find out the whereabouts of the wounded animal. A few yards up the creek an enormous yellow-barked acacia stretched its great arms over the bed of reeds below, and, thinking I might obtain a view from one of the lower branches, I was soon sitting astride of the lowest.

This species of acacia is very common throughout Low-Country districts, but is seldom found at any distance from water, frequently growing in it, but more often along the banks of large pools. In one spot near to which I have often

camped, a group of these trees grew for years in a large pool about 4 feet in depth. To my surprise, when I visited the place in 1892, I found every tree dead: the branches lay decaying in the water, and only the grey unsightly stumps—from which here and there hung a withered branch—stood in the pool. I have frequently seen similar groups of dead trees, but never have had another as good an opportunity of witnessing the simultaneous decay of so many. Nor do I know how to account for it, unless the brackish water—which in some streams is far more intense in quality than in others—has anything to do with it. This tree is commonly called the “fever-tree,” and not without some show of reason, as it is always found in the most malarious localities,—the banks of the rivers and streams that intersect the low-lying flats. And they have a most sickly, bilious appearance, too, their trunks,—frequently very massive,—branches, every bough and twig to the very top, being thickly coated with a fine fluffy yellow dust, which readily comes off on the hands or clothes. The brilliant green leafage of this acacia bears a very marked contrast to the bright golden yellow of the trunk and branches, and—when the tree is in blossom—to the luxuriant crop of powerfully-scented golden flowers. But that is wandering away from my subject.

Notwithstanding the prominence of my position, the most careful search failed to discover the leopard, and I began to think he must be dead; but taking it for granted he was not, until we were certain he was, I called to the boys to keep well together and to start firing the grass around the patch of bush in or near to which I believed the leopard to be, hoping thereby to drive him out and force him to cross on to my side. Two or three little wreaths of blue smoke were just curling upwards from behind the bush, and the boys were working quickly round with handfuls of lighted grass, when I saw something move on the edge of the cover, and barely had time to shout a warning to the boys, when, with a great noise and a swift straight rush, he charged out straight at them. I was in a positive funk, for I was powerless to help in any way; but the leopard fortunately was too intent upon escaping to go out of his way to maul any one, as the boys promptly scattered right and left; but it would have fared badly with any one he had met in his rush. He made straight off in the direction of the cover higher up the river, but

he did not get far, for I made either a really creditable or a very lucky shot from my perch. When he was fully 100 yards away, and going hard, I rolled him over, the bullet entering between the shoulder-blades and passing out of the mouth, completely carrying away the lower jaw. He simply collapsed, though I did not see him fall, but an object lying on the short, bright green grass of the new "burn," and glistening in the rays of the early sunlight, told of success, even before the shouts of the boys on seeing that he was down rang out. My first bullet had passed clean through him, but too far back for his vitals: doubtless the shock of the heavy spherical bullet had tumbled him over, but he could have made it uncomfortable for any one he had gripped. He was an older animal considerably than the other, with an imperfectly marked, light yellow skin; and his fangs were much broken. He only measured 6 feet 9 inches in total length, 2 feet 7 inches shoulder height.

On June 30 I dropped across a very large leopard, but though I worked hard to bring him to bag, and well deserved to get him, my attempts ended in failure. Two days before I had shot a magnificent old waterbuck bull, carrying the heaviest head, though not the longest horns, that I have yet seen. Their basal circumference was $10\frac{1}{2}$ inches, and they were correspondingly thick and heavy to their tips— $32\frac{1}{4}$ inches over all, $29\frac{5}{8}$ in straight line, base to tip. It was too late to cut the head off that night, as I was a good way from camp; but I sent boys out next day—who would know how to sever the neck-skin properly, as I had already marked it round with my knife on the previous evening—telling them to bring it on to the waggon. Upon their return they informed me that the carcass had been partly eaten by a large leopard, so I went over myself to examine the spot and see that the carcass was properly covered up from the keen vulturine eyes that had long been carefully watching the operation of decapitating the bull.

As is well known, vultures, although most useful birds in their way, are frequently a source of very great annoyance to the sportsman. The only certain method that can be adopted to keep them from a carcass is to cover it completely over with grass and thorn-branches, being careful at the same time to throw a little sand or grass over any large blood-stains which

may be on the ground. Tying a wisp of grass to a stick so that it sways in the wind, or hanging a coat or a shirt up over the carcass, are plans sometimes adopted, but not always successfully. I have noticed that when a carcass is completely covered, even though myriads of these birds have been circling round or perched on the trees during the operation, which they have watched from first to last, they all fly away in a quarter of an hour or twenty minutes afterwards; whereas if something is merely hung up to scare them off, their hunger will eventually overcome their temporary fear, and they will alight and eat the carcass. I can scarcely understand the reason for their acting thus, for in both cases they are well aware that the carcass is there, although in the one hidden from view, in the other exposed, unless indeed an object once lost to sight is at the same time lost to memory. I think it very conclusively proves how thoroughly they are dependent upon sight for their supply of food. A lion, as a rule, has very little chance of getting a second meal off any large animal he may have killed, as, having been unable or unwilling to drag it any distance to thick cover sufficiently dense to hide it from the vultures, these latter wait until he leaves the carcass in the morning, and then finish it for him during the day. Of course it frequently happens that a lion or a leopard kills close to a river-bank or near thick scrub, where they can effectually hide it without difficulty, and vultures never come near it. The way in which these loathsome but persevering birds manage to get at the inside of a carcass that is not cut open, and the hide of which is so tough as even to resist their powerful beaks, is most amusing. On one occasion a friend of mine shot a sable bull, which ran a few yards with the troop, then turned out and dropped dead. Not having seen it fall, we kept on after the troop, and did not find the dead one till two or three days afterwards, when we were surprised to see a string of vultures—I forget exactly how many, as it is a long time ago—file out of the dry hard hide by the enlarged anal orifice; and I have seen nine of these birds come out of a wildebeeste bull when I kicked the carcass, the mode of exit being similar to that of the previous case. The hollow rustling sound produced by them inside the dry hide was most uncanny.

On the morning following that upon which we had discovered

the fact of the waterbuck bull's carcass being visited by a leopard, I rode out very early, whilst still dark, intending to try and creep up close to the carcass and get a shot at daylight. Unluckily I lost my way in the dark, and high dawn found me still wandering around in an ocean of long grass, endeavouring to mark some bush or tree, or even a spruit, with whose shape or general appearance I was familiar. My nag, too, evidently did not think much of the business, and began to suspect I was "acting the fool," or had suddenly acquired a taste for botany. But I got right at last, and spied the fluttering bunch of grass which I had tied up in a thorn-tree to mark the spot by and to help to scare away the vultures, a couple of which interesting fowl, looking very cold and miserable, were perched on the topmost branch of an old dead *'mbondsa*-tree. Doubtless they had gone to roost there, reflecting bitterly upon the meanness of a man who could cover up a stinking old carcass, and hang up all manner of startling objects around it, to prevent them from gratifying their ever-moderate appetites!

I rode up, but while still 50 yards off saw a fine leopard jump away, and go bounding off through the dew-laden grass to the river-bank, where the cover was quite impenetrable. I jumped down, but it was useless to fire owing to the length of the grass and the enormous bounds the brute made, so I scrambled to my saddle again and galloped in pursuit, only to find him secure for the present in the dense cover, which extended for over a mile along the bank. As the chance of beating him out with any success seemed small, I let him alone for the day, revisiting the spot next morning only to find him gone, though I was at the carcass by early dawn. That night I watched for him with a couple of blue-lights, and probably he watched me; at any rate he did not show himself, but with a snarling "dead off!" went away elsewhere. I gave it up then, and none too soon, or the carcass would certainly have given *me* up—to fever, for it was getting very objectionable. But I gave the reflecting vultures the first turn at it.

Leopardesses, like lionesses, are, as a rule, most savage when they have young cubs, and will charge out unhesitatingly from their cover at any one passing too near, much as a bitch will do when she has pups. That this is not always the case, however,

the following incident will show. On August 1, 1891, I was riding along close under the slopes of the Libombo, over a stretch of burnt ground, with here and there a patch of thin wiry grass that had been passed over by the fire. Three boys accompanied me on foot. At the edge of one of these patches I caught sight of a small object as it lay down under a stunted tree, round which grew a few blades of thin grass. I saw a little round head, and believing it to be a serval, jumped down and fired. The bullet must have just grazed its head, striking the tree behind it, and sending the white splinters flying. As it jumped up and vanished amongst some low bushes growing round about, I saw that it was a young leopard, and knowing that the mother would probably be near by, I ran forward, reloading as I went, and calling to one of the boys to unstrap my coat from the saddle to catch the little one in. Comparatively speaking, the ground was bare about there, and yet for the life of me I could not see the leopardess, though I knew she was not far off. Suddenly she sprang up from a little patch of grass not more than ten paces to my right, and with an ugly snarl jumped away, her lithe beautiful form showing to perfection against the burnt dark background, and her every movement the personification of graceful ease and conscious strength. I fired a snap-shot as she ran between the bushes, but do not think I touched her, though the boys maintained she was hit. At all events, though I was quickly in the saddle, and galloping after her, I never saw her again: she got away in the open thorn-bush beyond.

As it was not very far from camp, I sent a boy back for the dogs, and meanwhile we commenced searching for the cub. Up and down, all over the place we went, but never a hair of the little imp did we see. All around this spot, with the exception of the direction in which the leopardess ran—and where we knew the cub had not followed her—was as bare as a billiard-table, so that we must have seen it if it had made away. Little did we think we were constantly passing within perhaps 2 feet of it, only overhead! We were obliged to give it up at last, as it became very late, and the boys not having returned with the dogs, we thought possibly we were farther from camp than we had expected. Had it been moonlight I would have watched for

the return of the leopardess, as, if unhurt, she would not delay long about looking for her cub. Had she been wounded, I think she would have charged, the surprise being so great, as it is such surprises that cause the larger *Felidæ* to charge, acting in self-defence—having no time to escape, and believing themselves in danger.

Next day we visited the spot, and solved the mystery. In a small patch of grass perhaps 4 feet across, and round, if not through, which we had repeatedly tramped when searching for the cub, was the mouth of an ant-bear hole, into which the little thing had bolted. We noticed a quantity of new earth turned up, and examined the spot, and there, sure enough, was the fresh spoor of leopardess and cub, the mother having scratched away the earth to enlarge the hole and enable her to get in and haul the youngster out, it being probably too much scared to come out of its own accord.

During that season I came across a large number of cheetas, especially in the neighbourhood of the Manzimtonti river, and had some rattling good runs after them, but seldom with any success, as they go with such speed that in bush-country a horse can do nothing with them. One fine male, however, I shot, rather luckily. We had been following the spoor of five lions ever since the morning, but having at last lost it in long grass, we off-saddled and let the horses feed about. It was one of those intensely hot days common to that season of the year, just before the rains set in; and we were all feeling somewhat drowsy on it, crawling along on a spoor being rather sleepy sort of work; so, lying in the shade of some thorn-trees, we all yielded to the influence of the heat and the oppressive stillness, and fell asleep. Reprehensible, certainly, but a fact nevertheless. I was the first to awake, and glancing at the sun told the boys to get the horses up. Muntumuni rose to his knees, and was in the act of stretching himself, when he startled me by saying, "We, baas, nanti 'tilwana!" ("Hey, sir, there are wild animals!") Lions at once flashed into my mind, as I jumped up with my rifle in time to see two cheeta entering a patch of long grass about 40 yards distant. We burnt it out, and I got an easy shot at the male, which dropped to one bullet. He was a beautiful specimen, 7 feet 1 inch in total length measured over the curves, 2 feet

10½ inches shoulder height, girth behind shoulders 33 inches. The other got away, as we delayed too long about saddling-up the horses. The boy said that as he glanced in that direction he saw them lying crouched in a bare place between us and the patch of long grass, and apparently watching the horses. Had they been lions, we might have paid a heavy penalty for thus going to sleep and leaving our horses unwatched.

And now in conclusion, just one word for the leopard, perhaps the most beautiful of the carnivoræ, but which, as a rule, gets nothing but opprobrious epithets showered upon him. I have hunted and shot them at all times and under all circumstances, by day and night, by krantz and kloof, by bush, plain, and river-side, and I have never found them deserving of the poor opinion frequently entertained of them. They are often daring and courageous to a degree; ever wary and cunning, and naturally suspicious, though the term "treacherous" always seems to me misapplied; but if they make up their minds to fight, then the sportsman who will fairly tackle them on foot can expect plenty of fun for his money. And we should not forget the full significance of the words "make up their minds to fight"; they imply the determination on the part of a creature—whose whole being is imbued with a sense of his inferiority and man's superiority—to face all and any odds sooner than fly. A gamekeeper armed only with a stick would think twice before he attacked a determined poacher carrying a gun which he was resolved to use—at least I should if I were the gamekeeper.

No, give the leopard his due, and keep the term "vermin" for hyænas and suchlike if you will. His retiring habits will call forth all the sportsman's skill in bush-craft ere he can circumvent him, and all his coolness and judgment then to bag him when found; and as I value an animal as a worthy object of sport according as he is difficult to secure, the beautiful spotted cat, the

"Wanton pard
Eyed like the evening star,"

stands very high in my estimation, and well deserves a foremost place amongst the rare trophies that are to be won by an African sportsman's rifle.



CHAPTER XIX.

LIONS AND THEIR HABITS.

Typical South African game—He votes for lions—Boyhood's South Africa—A well-worn subject—A silly sentimentalist—Lions easily killed—Following up wounded lions—Lions by day—A demonstration against *velschoenen*—Mutual surprise—Lions charging—Their habits—Dangerous on dark nights—Their leaping powers—Tree-climbing—Leona—Eating porcupines—A blind lioness—How lions kill their prey—Attack on a herd of cattle—Do lions eat the entrails of their prey?—Bone-eaters—Natural instinct—Favourite food—Carrying *versus* dragging—A night visit—Attack on the camp—Evidence of strength—Business elsewhere—Breeding habits—Mortality amongst male cubs—Coloration—*Bonte-poeten*—Suspicious nature—An equine puzzle—Under a blanket—Night shooting—Enamel foresights for rifles—The return to a kill—Disadvantages of shooting from a tree—Measurements of lions—Of lionesses.

LAST in order of sequence, though first in merit, of all the game which I have selected as fairly typical of the *feræ naturæ* which a sportsman visiting these districts may hope to meet with, the lion now claims our attention,—the one animal without a speci-

men of which no bag of big game could be considered complete, yet which, unless specially sought for, is least likely to be met with.

What a halo of romance clings even now, as it has ever done, around the very name of lion! Surely it would be difficult to find one amongst the "boys of England" who, having graduated in the usual course,—Mayne Reid, Fenimore Cooper, the Old Shekarry, Du Chaillu, Sir Samuel Baker, and Gordon Cumming, each of whom has aroused within him the hope of one day emulating the "deeds of derring-do" which they recount amongst Indians, grizzly bears, tigers, gorillas, elephants, and lions,—has not, after all, declared that he "votes for lions"! Where is the intending sportsman, looking forward to an African trip, in whose thoughts the lion does not stand in the front rank, even taking place before elephants, rhinoceros, and buffalo, or any other of the grand game in which this continent is so rich! And if you are an experienced sportsman and have encountered and slain lions in their native haunts, when all your adventures pass in review before you, do you not linger longest and with keenest pleasure upon the memory of one or other of your fairly won triumphs over the maned monarch of the African hunting-veldt?

I can well remember the time when the words "South Africa" conveyed but a very indefinite meaning to my mind. I believed they were applied to the southern portion of a large continent off whose stormy cape it was said the luckless Vanderdecken was doomed to beat about for ever and aye; a continent in which were to be found the Montes Lunæ, the Sahara, and many unexplored rivers, lakes, and forests; and whose population, when the last census was taken, consisted of lions, elephants, gorillas, crocodiles, Boers, slave-traders, and despotic Zulu chieftains. Africa without all these would have been but a meaningless word. But we grow wiser as we grow older, even though we may note with regret the utter dissipation of some of boyhood's most cherished dreams, and we soon learn that the Dark Continent is not all dark, not all sandy wastes—that its mountains, valleys, and plains, its mighty rivers and lakes, its forests and its kloofs, afford the grandest field of research for every branch of science, whilst its teeming millions of human

beings call forth the noblest efforts of philanthropists, and tax to the utmost the powers of the historian.

And yet, after all, to the adventurous mind, what would Africa be without its lions and its tales of lion-hunting?

So much has been written, however, upon the subject by far abler pens than mine, and by more experienced sportsmen than myself, that it is with any amount of diffidence that I undertake to add even my small quota, but at the same time in the hope that brother-sportsmen in this and other parts of the world, who love the grooved barrels, the mysteries of forest-lore, the lonely night-watches, the intense excitement of spooring the lion or tiger to its lair, and the fair stand-up fight at the close, may follow the recital with some interest, and perhaps recall to mind how, when, and where they last sought to try conclusions with the tawny cats. A few matters of interest, the result of my own careful personal observation, suggest themselves to me as deserving of a little passing attention; although the exhaustive description of these animals furnished by that most talented sportsman Mr F. C. Selous leaves very little to be said upon the subject, and even those who have never had the privilege of seeing lions in their native haunts can, through his descriptions, become perfectly conversant with their habits in a wild state.

Nowadays one is very likely to be sneered at as a silly sentimentalist who talks about a "majestic lion" or the "grandeur" of his voice, &c., &c.; but I shall admit at once that I prefer to risk the sneer and retain my long-cherished ideas concerning him, fully confirmed as most of them have been in later years by what personal experience I have had of the animal in question. Mighty strength in action; proud, conscious dignity when in repose, that falls very little, if anything, short of an appearance of majesty; and dauntless courage when fairly roused in facing any odds,—these are, to my mind, qualities inseparable from the lion; so let those sneer who will, they are the losers, not I. At the same time one need not go to the opposite extreme and attribute to him qualities which he does not possess—a ferocity so devilish that none but a lunatic would dare to attack him, and a generosity and magnanimity so great that

he would scorn to injure an unarmed man who fell into his clutches.

As regards his savage nature, it should be borne in mind that many of the thrilling tales of lion-hunting are handed down to us from the early days when old muzzle-loading weapons were in vogue, and when serious accidents and narrow escapes were the unavoidable consequence. A lion will not be fairly overcome nowadays, even by a sportsman armed with the latest improved modern breechloaders, unless he has some knowledge of the animal's habits, and acts with promptitude, judgment, and coolness.

As a matter of fact, a lion is an easier killed beast than any of the antelopes, but it is the mere fact of its being a lion, with power to do an infinity of harm if only wounded, that tries the nerves, and causes one sometimes to make worse shooting at them than he would at an animal one-tenth their size. If, when armed with a reliable rifle, one faces a lion, and can let its demonstrations of voice and gesture pass unheeded, and recollect that he has it in his power to kill it as easily as he would a duiker, then he will stand but little chance of coming to grief. Nevertheless, hunting up a *wounded* lion is very dangerous work, and should not be attempted without taking every precaution, not only for one's own safety but for that of his native followers, should he have any.

All lions are alike in general characteristics, though each will, of course, be found to possess its own individuality, so that it is impossible to form a fair estimate of their character from the acts of one or two under certain circumstances, seeing that others similarly situated might act very differently. Shy and retiring by nature, it is quite by chance that one happens upon them in the daytime, unless they are found lying near a kill, and even then they move off very quietly and expeditiously if they become aware of an approach from a distance. If surprised at close quarters, they usually jump away with deep startled grunts; in fact, if not interfered with, or actually in a starving state, there is absolutely nothing to fear from them if met in the daytime. Occasionally they will walk a few steps towards the intruder with a low growl, perhaps to enable them to make him out

better; but there is small danger of their attacking under such circumstances.

During the time when the last Border Commission was at work beaconing-off the boundary-line between the Transvaal and Portuguese territories, one of the Boers belonging to the party came on a lioness lying amongst some stones in a small detached kopje, into which she had dragged, and where she had partially eaten, a waterbuck cow. She charged out at him at once, growling fiercely, but halted a few yards distant, scratching up the ground with her paws. It was only intended as a demonstration to frighten him of the *velschoenen* away, and as he quickly took the hint, she did not trouble him any further, but retired to the kopje, whence, watching her opportunity as soon as the coast was clear, she got away into a wooded gully where she was not followed.

On one occasion not long after I had come out to Africa, whilst travelling down country in the Nylstroom district of the Transvaal, I came very suddenly upon a lioness, which I had the good luck to bag. I was following a number of guinea-fowl through an extensive thicket of low impala-bush, and on running round a large clump to try and intercept the wary and swift-footed birds, I came on her lying on a bare sandy place in the shade of the bush. To say that I was startled is to put it very mildly, for she was but little over 30 yards distant, and I had not much acquaintance then with lions in their wild state; moreover, the meeting was most unexpected. When I first caught sight of her she was lying with her chin raised about 6 inches above her paws, which were stretched in front of her in an attitude of watchfulness, for she had evidently heard me; but the instant I stopped, she lowered her head again, and stared hard at me. I had a heavy single .577 Express with me, by Holland & Holland, and which constituted my whole battery at that time; and though I had found it a most unsuitable weapon for shooting running guinea-fowl with, it now stood me in good stead. I was panting hard from my exertions, but managed to pull myself together, and kneeling down, I gave her a shot between the neck and shoulder—now a very favourite one of mine when a lion is end on—and, to my unspeakable delight and relief, she reared up and fell over backwards, kicking herself along

into the bush by her hind-legs, and roaring loudly the while. In less than five minutes she was dead, and I did not go looking for any more guinea-fowl *that* afternoon. I skinned her myself, and carried the skin four miles or more to the waggon. In those days I would no more have thought of leaving it and sending boys to skin it than I would have thought of flying!

A wounded lion, however, is a very different animal, and if incautiously approached is fairly certain to charge—although probably in so doing it only acts in self-defence, attacking those whom he thinks would work him harm, or whose close proximity places him in further danger. I have never known a lion charge from a distance of over 30 yards, and it is usually less. They will generally advance at first at a slow or apparently slow walk—the great length of the animal makes the distance actually covered in a stride considerable—then halt at twenty paces or so, keeping the great broad head well down between the shoulders, and growling incessantly. If not stopped then, they will charge home with a heavy rush, but they do not spring. It has been stated that a lion, if boldly faced, will never make good his charge, but I think the statement open to question. Individual lions might very possibly be cowed by a bold front, but so far as my limited experience goes, they take a great deal of cowing when once they make up their minds to charge. Out of the twenty-eight lions I have had the good fortune to bag, I have only been fairly charged to close quarters on three occasions, and each time was lucky enough to floor them almost at the muzzle of the rifle; but that was quite close enough to satisfy me, and on no occasion have I had to regret not having laid my rifle down and endeavoured to “cow them by a bold front”!

Lions drink once a-day, in the evenings, between sunset and 10 P.M.; but if they have killed a head of game during the night they sometimes go away from the carcass—if it be close to water—after eating for an hour and a half or two hours, and drink. Returning again, they will eat for two hours more, and then have another drink; and after a third visit to the carcass, will yet again drink before lying up for the day. If the kill be far from water, they will remain at it or in the vicinity till dawn, but will invariably have a drink after leaving the carcass and before retiring to their lair. They lap loudly and deliberately,

and with evident enjoyment, pausing awhile between each three or four laps. Lions seldom drink at a river twice in the same spot, unless, of course, they have a kill close by; but if water is scarce, and in pools far apart, they are compelled to visit one pool frequently.

During the daytime they lie up in any thick cover, close to their kill if possible, sometimes selecting a dense reed-bed or an extent of long dry grass, but more frequently thick scrubby bush, with plenty of shade. As a rule, lions go about in parties of three or four in number, but troops of seven, eight, or nine are not unfrequently met with. Twelve is the largest number I have ever seen together, though I have heard of as many as fifteen in a troop. I have an idea that these larger troops are more frequently seen in localities where game is scarce.

In fine weather lions seldom move abroad till dusk, or even till quite dark, retiring again to their lairs at dawn—though, if they have killed, they may frequently be found at the carcass after sun-up. In districts where they are plentiful—such as the Matamiri bush to the south of the Sabi, and in parts of Nyasaland—they may constantly be heard grunting up to eight or nine o'clock in the morning. In damp, wet, cloudy weather, however, they move about at all hours, and can frequently be heard up to 10 A.M., and as early as three o'clock in the afternoons. During such weather they become restless and uneasy, and are then always most dangerous about a camp, their attacks upon cattle being almost invariably made upon dark rainy nights. Their instinct tells them that in such weather cattle as well as game are inclined to herd together and seek shelter, where they stand comparatively oblivious to their surroundings, and thus fall an easy prey. There is no doubt that lions hate the full glare of the sun, and that they feel very acutely any exertion that they are forced to make during the heat of the day. Their pads, too, become hot and skinned if they travel far over the hot ground, so it is small wonder that they are so seldom found abroad in such weather.

Although lions roar very loudly sometimes on moonlight nights, they are, as a rule, excessively quiet under such circumstances. The walk of a lion is particularly sedate, though they seem somewhat loose-jointed, which gives them a rather

slouching appearance; but their stride is long and free, and they cover a great deal of ground. In walking the head is held low, in a line with the back, and the alert, watchful, cautious movements so noticeable in the leopard are entirely wanting. In fact, they move as though they were aware that they are masters of the situation, and do not need to trouble themselves much about what goes on around them. They trot heavily, and in bounding off do not spring, but move along at a clumsy gallop. Wild lions that I have seen seldom present the hungry gaunt appearance with which they are usually credited. I have almost always found them fat and in splendid condition, and certainly nothing like the bony lanky creatures one usually sees in zoological collections.¹

Male lions certainly give one the idea of weakness and hollowness in the hind-quarters, but they only appear so in comparison with the heavy massive head and shoulders; whereas lionesses are more evenly proportioned. The difference in size between the fore- and hind-paws of a lion and of a lioness is very marked. In the former the hind-paws seem small by comparison with the enormous fore-paws, those of the lioness being more equal. By examining the spoor, a careful observer can therefore frequently ascertain the sex of the animal he is following.

The leaping powers of a lion have been a great deal overrated, I fancy, though they are not inconsiderable. They very seldom exert themselves to leap even the narrowest donga or spruit, always preferring to walk round or through it. I question if a lion could cover more than 20 feet at a leap on level ground; though only last year I saw a lioness leap up on to a bank which was at least 12 feet high, and she did it without any apparent exertion whatever.

Very little seems to have been ascertained as to the lion's capability for tree-climbing. I related an instance some time

¹ I am aware that this is an opinion that will not be shared by many, it being generally considered that the wild lion is a gaunt beast, that of menageries well-fed and fat. Nevertheless, I know of no reason for altering it, as it has always appeared to me that lions in captivity look the very reverse of well-fed; they seem gaunt, lean, and hungry, and assume a slouching gait, as different from their long free stride in a wild state as captivity is different from freedom. In a word, the menagerie lion, as a rule, is flabby and slouching; the wild lion hard, muscular, and active.

ago (in the columns of 'Land and Water,'—the article is reproduced in this work) which came under my notice, of a lioness climbing fully 20 feet into a tree, in order to get at some *biltong* which the Kafirs had hung up to dry, a circumstance which at the time astonished me not a little. But I can conscientiously say that the feat seems so incredible that if I had not had reliable witnesses to the fact with me when it happened, I should have been very chary about relating it. A heavy male lion would of course be physically incapable of climbing; but there seems to be no reason why a lioness should not do so, except on the score of its great weight, the strength of the claws being inadequate to the task of supporting the heavy body. The claws of the lighter leopards and other Felidæ are stronger in proportion to the weight they have to bear, hence they ascend trees easily. I particularly noticed that the lioness I have referred to was a very narrow, lightly-built brute, and looked very little larger than a big cheeta, though she was a dangerously cunning scoundrel for all that, and a man-eater to boot. That a lion, like a tiger, will charge and rear itself up against a tree to get at any one who has wounded it, or has attracted its attention after being wounded, is an undoubted fact, and I have myself witnessed such instances; but it must be a very unusual occurrence for even a lioness to fairly climb into a tree.¹

In common with leopards, all lions have a habit of rearing up against a tree, or old stump, for the purpose of cleaning and sharpening their claws on the bark.

Lions appear to have no fixed way of killing their prey, but the usual methods appear to be either by springing upon the shoulders and biting the back of the neck, or, more frequently still, rushing along the ground and seizing the animal by the throat, at the same time dislocating the neck either by throwing the animal upon its haunches and forcing the neck up, or by

¹ Since the above was written, Mr Sharpe, H.M. Vice-Consul, British Central Africa, has told me of how on one occasion he saw a lion (which I believe he shot), about half-grown in point of size, jump down out of a low bushy tree as he approached, but he had no means of ascertaining with what object the lion had climbed the tree. It proves, however, that I am in error in stating that a male lion "would be physically incapable of climbing." Such an occurrence must, however, be very rare. I should add that Mr Sharpe informed me that the tree in which he saw this lion was sloping and easy of ascent.

springing clear over it, while the teeth are still fast in the neck and one forepaw on the muzzle, thereby causing immediate dislocation. A similar result is as often achieved by the lion springing on the animal's shoulders from behind, and dragging the head downwards with its claws, thus causing the victim to fall forward with its head underneath, when dislocation of the neck must follow.

I think horned animals are seldom attacked in this way, though I was once called to hunt up some lions, five in number, which had got in amongst a lot of cattle, and killed nine of them. There was a male lion, two lionesses, and two half-grown cubs; the last were evidently going through a course of tuition, and had badly mangled some of the unfortunate cattle. I only saw five head of cattle that had been killed; a four-year-old bull—evidently killed by the cubs, and probably assisted at the last by their mother—three cows, and an ox. The ox and two of the cows had been killed by dislocation of the neck, which had been seized from underneath and forced upwards; in the case of the ox one hind-leg was dislocated, evidently by the animal being suddenly jerked back on to its haunches. The other cow had been seized by the shoulders, and the neck bitten through behind; it had also been dislocated, but it was difficult to decide how, as the animal had fallen with its head bent underneath it, and consequently the neck might have been thus broken. I have never been an actual witness to such an attack, but the methods adopted can easily be understood if the dead animal is carefully examined.

Heavy animals are sometimes dragged down by the flanks, and it is not at all an uncommon thing to see buffalo and giraffe with great seams down flanks and hind-quarters made by lions' claws. I have frequently seen Burchell's zebra and impala that have been killed by bites at the back of the neck and under the throat; and upon one occasion I found a sassaby cow which had been dragged down by a lion, its neck and foreshoulder being dislocated: there were deep claw-marks on the face—the nose being much torn—and on the back of the neck, while the withers were much bitten.

Judging by the habits of a young lioness which I kept for over two years as a pet, I should be inclined to think that their well-

known practice of eating putrid meat is merely an adaptation of themselves to circumstances, for it was a very long time before I could persuade Leona to look at a piece of meat that was at all "high"; and when she eventually found that she had to eat it or go hungry (for I was often at my wits' end to know how to procure buck-meat for her), she yielded only under pressure, and very unmistakably signified her disapproval of it. In fact, on several occasions she absolutely refused to eat it at all, preferring to remain hungry until such time as I could shoot another buck for her. And, by the way, I never could induce her to touch the flesh of a porcupine, though in a wild state they often kill and eat them. I have frequently seen both lions and lionesses with the tips of porcupine-quills stuck fast in nose, chin, and paws; and in 1892 my friends the Barber Brothers killed an old lioness near my camp that was almost completely blind, her face and eyes being stuck full of quills. In most cases, however, I think the lions have been old, or lean and hungry.

Until quite lately it has been an undecided question whether lions ever eat the entrails of their prey; and if not, with what object they bury them, as is their invariable custom. Mr Selous has now, however, related (in his chapter on Lions in the Badminton Library volume on Big-Game Shooting) an instance which came under his notice of lions eating the entrails of a buffalo, and thereby he has set the matter at rest. But I am convinced, nevertheless, that this is of very, very rare occurrence indeed—quite as much so as that of a lion climbing a tree. Certainly, after most careful observation upon every occasion that was afforded me, I can affirm that no instance of their doing so has ever come to my notice, nor have I ever met white men or Kafirs who have known of such. But that the entrails of all animals caught by them are at once dexterously torn out and buried is certain, and the question naturally suggests itself, With what object do they act thus? It appears to me that a very easy and probable solution is forthcoming. A lion would scarcely confine himself to burying only the entrails if his intentions were to preserve certain portions of the carcass—tit-bits—from the vultures, with a view to subsequently eating them. In that case he would bury one portion on one occasion and another on the next, and not take the trouble to religiously save one particu-

lar part each time till the last. It seems only reasonable to suppose that he would make an attempt to bury other portions of the carcass besides the entrails, which, as he felt himself surfeited — “full inside” — he would know must fall to the winged and four-footed scavengers, who long have had their eyes on the kill. But this they never do, at least where I have met with them. True, they will often scratch up a little grass and turf with their paws, throwing it out behind them on to the carcass, but no one could even suggest that they imagine they cover it up. Now instinct teaches them that by dragging the carcass, as is their invariable custom, when its weight is not too great, to a quiet well-sheltered nook amongst some thorny scrub, or into long cover on the banks of a river, the chances are that the vultures, for all their keen eyesight, will not be able to discover it; and that neither will the small predatory animals find it out, provided they are not attracted by the smell. The lion hopes to get outside of the greater portion of the meat before it rots, but he has no use for the entrails, and furthermore, knows that they give forth a very powerful and far-spreading odour, even when fresh, which would at once attract other creatures, and lead to the certain and quick discovery of the whole carcass, with the result that one day the lion would find, on coming back from drinking at the nearest water, that his larder was empty, or contained only a few clean-picked bones. So a hole is scratched out, and the entrails are carefully buried and covered up. If this suggestion is not the correct explanation of the why and wherefore of this peculiar habit, then I do not know how otherwise to account for it.

A full-grown lion will eat 40 lb. weight of meat at a sitting from any animal whose carcass is large enough to warrant his return to it next day. On the second night he will eat more, probably because he has more time to do it in, many valuable moments being wasted on the first night in preparing the carcass for food, as it were, opening and disembowelling it, and tearing off the hair, the thickest of which it removes with its teeth, together with patches of skin. The meat is then bolted in large mouthfuls, to an accompaniment, as the night wears on and the stomach gets full, of very ugly mannerless grunts. After eating the viscera, a lion starts on the solid meat, usually the inside

of the hind-leg near to the soft part of the flanks where it has torn the carcass open before disembowelling it. Almost as frequently it starts on the buttocks under the tail, the fore parts being always devoured last. Large scraps of skin with the hair attached are bolted along with the meat. I have upon more than one occasion seen one or both of an animal's ears bitten off, also the cartilage of the nose; the *root* of the tongue as well is frequently torn out and devoured. Occasionally the tail is bitten off; and all this, I believe, before the animal's entrails are taken out.

Are lions bone-eaters? The question having been put to me on one occasion, I replied in the negative, and have since been taken to task about it. Nevertheless, I am convinced that I am correct in saying they are not bone-eaters—that is to say, as are the *Canidæ* and *Hyænidæ*, the sense in which I understand the words. Unquestionably they eat some bones, as the phosphates contained in all bony substances are necessary to the maintenance of their health; but such as they eat are comparatively small or soft ones. The sternum, scapula, ribs, and the cartilaginous matter around the joints of the larger bones—these are eaten; but I very much question whether a lion, unless uncommonly hungry, would attempt to crush the larger bones with a view to making a meal off them, as would a dog or hyæna.

A lion will spend a long time licking at a bone, turning it around in its jaws licking it and chewing the soft ends—then he drops it; acting very differently from the matter-of-fact hyæna, which will get the largest bone across his jaws, pull a face, and crush the tit-bit into splinters between his powerful teeth—frequently indeed bolting large bones whole, his œsophagus being most accommodating. And the fact of a lion devouring bones to appease his hunger when in a state of semi-starvation scarcely proves him to be a bone-eater; for if it did, we might logically call the human race rat-eaters, and heaven knows what besides, to say nothing of cannibals, which would be a somewhat sweeping assertion to make of mankind generally.

No, a lion or a leopard, when once they have brought a carcass down to mere bones, will not visit it again. If one knows that a lion has eaten at a carcass, and upon visiting it again finds the bones devoured, or at any rate absent, he must not jump to the

conclusion that the lion has made away with them, but bear in mind how many hangers-on have been waiting their chance to cut in when the lion has eaten. Lions will follow the teachings of instinct in this respect, and not run the risk of damage to their fangs—upon which their very existence depends—which would certainly result from their doing anything beyond mere trifling with large bones.

The favourite food of lions appears to be buffalo, Burchell's zebra, and impala. They will often hang about on the spoor of a troop of buffalo for days together, watching for a chance to drop on some disabled animal or unwary youngster that may lag behind. When going off with their prey, no matter what its size—so long as it is not too heavy—lions invariably seize it by the neck and drag it along the ground. If not too cumbersome they trail it alongside of them; but in the case of a heavy animal, they face it and move backwards, dragging it after them, as one would drag a heavy baulk of timber along by a rope. They are comparatively so low at the shoulders that to carry off any but the smallest antelope clear of the ground is a practical impossibility: they certainly cannot carry off an impala without letting its legs drag; and nowadays lions do not throw things over their shoulders and walk off with them! But the easy manner in which they thus drag enormous weights is evidence of their massive strength.

Upon one occasion I found the carcass of a blue wildebeeste bull that had been killed by three lionesses. They had disembowelled it with their customary dexterity, and buried the entrails on the spot where they had killed it. They had then dragged the carcass a distance of 50 yards to the place where I found them at it; but although my Kafirs and I examined the spot most thoroughly, we could find no more trace of where the thing had been dragged than a slight abrasion of the surface of the ground, such as might be caused by a foreleg of the wildebeeste dragging. The grass which grew all around was of a wiry springy nature, and may possibly have quickly returned to its original position after being pressed down by the carcass dragged over it. But it was very singular, and made me wonder whether the lionesses had together lifted it clear of the ground.

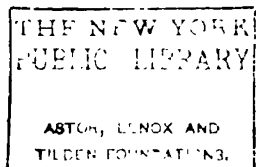
I once witnessed a remarkable instance of daring and display of strength on the part of a lion, which I will here relate.

I was shooting in company with some friends of mine on the Timbabati river, and we were camped on a narrow promontory formed by a sharp bend of the river, the banks of which were thickly covered with long reeds, thus affording fine cover for lions. Half-way across this point, and at the back of the camp, ran a low ridge of rocks; and upon this particular night some lions had come down to pay us a visit, to see what they could lift, and possibly being desirous of testing the quality of our beef or horse-flesh. For some hours they kept sentry-go at the back of the rocky ridge, grunting and moaning in a weird and startling fashion, every now and again breaking out into low muffled roaring, causing our horses to drag at their halters and start from side to side uneasily, and tremblingly, with anxious eyes, to gaze in the direction whence the terrible sounds proceeded. After a while, however, they became quieter, and we lay down,—only for a few minutes, however, when the lions, which for a space had been ominously silent, again started roaring so loudly and fiercely, and apparently so close to the camp, that we all sprang up, rifles in hand, and stood grouped around one of the fires, on to which we soon pitched a few good logs, sending up a glittering crackling shower of sparks into the darkness of the night. Again everything became quiet, and we instructed the Kafirs to replenish the fires—a nearly unnecessary order, as it was obeyed almost before given. For fully a quarter of an hour we stood about the fire, the lions again silent, save for at long intervals a low sullen grunting from amongst the reeds on the river-side, into which they appeared to have retreated. For the second time we lay down; but scarcely had we pulled the blankets over us when there was a rush, a stifled roar, a loud snapping sound, followed by wild shouts from the Kafirs, the bellowing of oxen and snorting of horses, then a crashing sound as of bushes breaking down; whilst above all came a deep bellowing moan of pain and terror from out of the black night, growing fainter and fainter in the distance, and we knew that the lions had secured a victim.

For a few moments the excitement was intense. Some flew to the horses, now dragging wildly at their riems, and almost



Wild-cat Camp, Mabutsha River.



choking themselves in their terrified attempts to break loose; some to the frightened oxen, which were stamping and stumbling in a confused mass over the clattering yokes and jingling trek-chains; whilst one or two Kafirs, in answer to our shouts for a light, vainly attempted to start decent torches going to enable H—— and me to go to the rescue of the ox. We did not delay long—there was no time to wait for the light: barefooted, and clad only in our shirts, we rushed out, rifles in hand, towards where we could still hear the crashing of bushes and the moaning cries of the unfortunate ox. As we approached the spot, the lion heard us, and, letting go his hold on the ox, jumped away into the reeds before we could use our rifles, though I fancied I saw him moving off ghost-like in the surrounding darkness. We found the ox lying down in a perfectly natural position, though all attempts to make him stand up failed. H—— and I watched by the ox all night, but the lion did not return. In the morning we had to kill the ox, as daylight disclosed the fact that one hind-leg had been completely smashed, evidently by a blow from the lion's paw; but how this happened one can only conjecture.

It seems remarkable that the lion should have deliberately disabled its victim in the middle of our camp—the ox had been tied up with the others to the yokes—surrounded by bright fires, within a few yards of all the Kafirs, and but a few paces from where we ourselves were lying down. As there were other lions in the party—probably three altogether—it would have seemed a better plan to have endeavoured to stampede the cattle (this was evidently their first intention, when promenading to windward of the camp), and then seize them as they ran out into the darkness. I think it is questionable whether the blow was intentionally aimed at the hind-quarters: very possibly the lion intended to strike the neck (though I have never seen animals thus killed), but as the ox was lying tail-on to him, he sprang short, and the blow fell on the hind-leg. But whatever the lion's object, the result of the attack was sufficiently patent, and I have never seen clearer evidence of the marvellous strength of these brutes than the terribly crushed condition of that ox. The great bones of the leg were splintered and the flesh a mass of black pulp and extravasated blood; and yet there was scarcely a claw-mark upon the skin,—all this injury had been done by the mere force

of the blow, and had the leg been under some giant steam-hammer it could scarcely have been more completely shattered.

The ox being thus incapacitated from movement, the lion seized the unfortunate brute by the head and face with its jaws, the great fangs penetrating deep into the frontal bone and fearfully smashing and tearing the jaws and tongue. The ox, with its face in the lion's mouth, could only signify its pain and terror by the low muffled bellowing sounds we heard as it was being dragged off into the bush. The sharp snap heard as the lion sprang on the ox was occasioned by the sudden breaking of the riem with which the latter had been tied up. We never shot that lion, as he did not return to the scene of his raid, probably owing to the fact that H—— had killed an old "stink-bull" giraffe close by, which attracted the lion and his colleagues, and caused them to leave our noisy camp in peace.

I do not think lionesses have any definite breeding season; but, as a rule, they bring forth their young in the summer months and the early autumn, between November and March. They have one, two, or three cubs in a litter, which are born blind; three is the usual number. A far larger proportion of lioness than of lion cubs arrive at maturity, and I do not know how this is accounted for. The lion has been accused of killing his male progeny, but whether justly so, is, I think, open to question. The number of each sex actually born into the world appears to be about equal, but for some reason or other fewer males than females reach maturity. I believe it has been observed that young male lions in captivity suffer very much during the time of losing their milk-teeth and cutting the permanent ones; and probably this may be the case in their wild state, and death may frequently result. The devotion of a lioness to its young is beyond question: they become fiercely jealous of any intrusion, and will charge anything and everything that may appear to offer a menace to their cubs.

It is well known that individual lions differ very much from one another in colour, varying from a pale silvery grey or yellow through almost every shade to deep brownish grey. As a rule, the darker the ground-colour of the fur, the darker will be the mane and the markings on the feet and legs. The difference in colour is even noticeable in the cubs, though all are alike spotted and striped. Some appear to retain these markings with greater

distinctness than others. Lionesses, however, are far less variable in their colour, being almost always of a pale tawny yellow, seldom attaining such depth of colour as the male; but during the season of 1892 I saw one—at least I think it was a lioness, but I did not bag her—of a particularly dark brown-grey colour, a very large and handsome beast.

Some lions have no more mane than lionesses. One old fellow killed by a friend of mine some years ago on the 'Timbabati had positively no mane whatever, and I have myself killed two old male lions with certainly no more mane than a cheeta has. Others carry a scanty yellow mane, of a pale straw colour interspersed with darker hairs; some a deep brownish mane plentifully streaked with grey and yellow hairs: these usually have the mane full and flowing, and longer on the shoulders than even the black manes. The latter are far less common: the mane is generally full, of a rich warm yellow on the cheeks, and black on the chest and shoulders. Those lions carrying a black or at any rate a dark mane are called by the Boers *Zwart-voor-lijf* (black fore-quarters), the others being *Geel-voor-lijf* (yellow fore-quarters). The former are also termed *Bonte-poeten* (spotted feet), in allusion to the usually darker foot-markings of these animals; and they are considered by them the most dangerous. But it is needless to say that nowadays the idea of any such difference in character being determined by the colour is rejected, each being equally as much or as little to be feared as the other.

Lions are by nature very suspicious, and anything they see, but of which they are unable to determine the nature, or anything having the semblance of a snare or trap, they will approach with the utmost caution. I remember how, some years ago, a white horse, knee-haltered, strayed away from our camp in a district that was then infested by lions. Several days elapsed before we found him, and we had at last given him up altogether as lost, thinking that probably he had provided certain hungry lions with a good square meal. But not a bit of it; the old fellow was unhurt, and was found grazing very contentedly on a patch of nice young grass, as though there were no such things as lions in South Africa, yet the quantity of spoor of these beasts in his vicinity told us how narrow an escape he had been. It is more than probable that he owed it to the fact of his being

knee-haltered, the lions being unable to understand the nature of a beast whose head and foreleg were fast together; and not understanding it, were too suspicious to attack it.

Upon another occasion a friend of mine and I crept out from the camp—each with a blanket thrown over us, and trailing behind—to the carcass of a horse which lay about 50 yards distant, and upon which a lion and a lioness were feeding. I am confident that they observed us approaching, as several times we saw their dark forms, looming large in the dusky light, as they rose from behind the carcass and honoured us with a hard stare and a warning growl, dropping down again into the grass as we ceased to advance, and applying themselves to their task as if desirous of putting away the largest possible quantity of meat in the shortest possible time. When we were within about twelve paces of the carcass, the lion suddenly sprang away with an angry growl, and stood some distance off in the long grass making a great noise; but the lioness, raising herself up, stood with her forepaws on the body of the horse, eyeing us intently and keeping up a continuous low growling. We promptly cut her short, and sent her rolling over and over in the grass, her angry growling changed into a choking death-gasp.

Some remarks that I have made elsewhere in this volume upon night-shooting apply equally well to lion-shooting by night. For some years I have made the pursuit of these animals and of leopards my one aim and object in the hunting-veldt, and a good deal of whatever success has fallen to me has been due to my adopting this mode of securing them. In saying that I have made their pursuit my aim and object, I do not wish to be understood as meaning that I have used any means, fair or unfair, to destroy them. If in olden times a man who shot a fox in Leicestershire ran a risk of getting his neck stretched, I certainly think that one who would trap, poison, or set a spring-gun for a lion, deserves to be hung, drawn, and quartered—that is, of course, if he is a man who can use a rifle. There may be certain circumstances under which the setting of a spring-gun is permissible, though very seldom; but the trap and poison for lions are not a sportsman's tools, but those of a coward. Equally so do I consider it most unsportsmanlike to shoot a lion-cub, unless nearly full grown, when of course they are barely distinguishable from full-grown beasts. But I have never felt any

reasonable doubts as to the legitimacy of night-shooting; and if ever "the end justifies the means," then these are justifiable.

I do not mean to suggest that it is equally sportsmanlike to watch from a tree or *scherm* for them, as to shoot them fairly face to face; but certainly I do not think it unsportsmanlike. Watching from a tree is of course very tame work, and there is absolutely no danger attached to it—though there is a charm of its own about night-watching, whether from a tree or elsewhere. Besides, as I shall show farther on, watching from such a position is apt to prove very unsatisfactory; but if posted in a small *scherm* close to the lions' kill, one may get just about as much excitement out of it as is good for him,—I think that will not be denied. The long lonely vigil, the deep moaning of the lions, while yet far distant, breaking upon the hushed stillness of the night; the anxious listening for their stealthy though heavy tread; their cautious advance, and the savage feasting as they group around their kill within twenty paces of one's *scherm*,—these combine to render the situation the most intensely romantic one in which it is possible to be placed. Upon dark nights such watching becomes very unromantic, though equally as exciting, if not more so—the idea of being so close to the great brutes, yet unable to see them unless they move against the sky-line, being an uncanny one.

During the last three years I have used blue-lights for night-shooting. The plan is by no means invariably successful, however. Sometimes lions will stand well, perhaps rushing off a few yards at the first flare-up, but standing again to look before they are out of the range of the light, and giving one ample time for a shot. This usually happens when the lions have been so far unaware of one's proximity; but at other times they clear off at once without stopping to ask questions. On one occasion I saw a lioness drop quickly, crouching low in the grass as soon as the light flared up: she lay there growling until I fired at her and missed her, when she jumped away into the darkness. It is advisable always to have the blue-light fixed to a bush or stick, and pointed in the direction of the carcass, or wherever the lions are expected to be, and so arranged that the light shall fall on the foresight of the rifle.

It usually happens that one overlooks an animal by moonlight: it is therefore always best to take well under him, as the

foresight of the rifle can seldom be seen at all unless it is "full" in the V of the backsight. The enamel sights are a comparatively late invention. They are very good for moonlight work, and in certain positions in thick bush; but, so far as I have tried them, they are useless in the day, or in any position against the light, and for all-round work I do not think they can compare with the ordinary ivory front-sight.¹

When watching a kill by moonlight, if lions come to it, and evince neither alarm nor suspicion of one's presence, it is a mistake to precipitate matters by being in too great a hurry to fire. I always stay my hand as long as possible, for it is a most interesting study to watch them, and later on better chances are almost certain to offer themselves; besides, one can usually quickly enough divine their intentions, if they are about to decamp, and can fire then if necessary. They almost invariably keep to the same track when going to or coming from a kill, which they approach with great caution, walking in single file until near to it, and occasionally making a circuit round it, or quartering the ground to leeward, to satisfy themselves that there is no trap awaiting them: they then advance boldly. But in districts where they are not much disturbed, they will frequently return direct to a kill at a heavy, slinging trot. If a kill has been tampered with during their absence, or if they have not yet had a meal off it, they will seize and drag it a little distance, usually under a bush or into some long grass; but if once they have partaken, and revisit it, they never move it to any great distance afterwards, though they may turn it round or drag it a yard or two. When eating at a carcass, lions will frequently tear off a shoulder or other portion and retire with it into the grass or under a bush, and eat at leisure. A *scherm* of thorn-bushes about 4 feet high, built below wind of the track upon which the lions come and go from a carcass, usually affords a good opportunity for a shot, but I prefer to be near the carcass, if certain of the direction in which

¹ I have since killed a magnificent male lion—the second largest that I have yet bagged—and a lioness, when using these enamel sights. The lion I shot on a clear, bright, moonlight night, in an open glade, as he advanced towards my *scherm* under a little bush; the lioness I shot in the grey dawn,—and on both occasions the sights acted very well.

the lions have gone off in the morning. A shot can be obtained from a tree, but this plan is open to many objections. If the tree be a small one, it is sure to sway in the wind just at the critical moment; besides, it is far more difficult to make out an animal distinctly when looking down on him—especially if he is standing in yellow grass—than it is when his form appears clear cut against the sky-line. But in close bush the airs are so variable that it is absolutely necessary to watch from some raised position, to avoid giving them the taint in the air.

When shooting lions at night, a double rifle should always be used, as, if only wounded, a lion will frequently make a dash at the spot whence he saw the flash of the rifle appear; and it will then go hard with a man if he has not another barrel or a spare rifle. An instance came under my notice some years ago which bears upon this subject. A lioness had killed an ox close to the waggons and dragged it off into the bush. The ox had not been tied up with the span, as it was lame, so it had been permitted to lie down in the grass near the waggons, and there the lion had seized it. On the following day the owner of the waggons found the carcass and built a *scherm* round it, setting a *stel* (spring-gun) near the entrance, for which purpose he used a long Martini-Henry rifle. In the night the gun went off, the report being followed by loud angry growling, which continued for several minutes, and then ceased. Next day the man went with some Kafirs to the spot, where they found that all the lashings by which the rifle had been secured were torn down; the rifle itself—with only a few sharp splinters of wood doing duty for a stock, the wood under the barrel torn away, the barrel bent, and both trigger and trigger-guard smashed—lay in the grass some yards away, while another 50 yards farther on lay the lioness, dead. She had got the bullet too far back, and had at once charged at the spot whence the flash came and wreaked dire vengeance upon the cruel trap that had thus fatally wounded her. Had the owner been behind that rifle, methinks he would have fared badly! I saw the broken rifle myself with the teeth-marks in it, and have no reason to question the facts as related to me. The jaws of the lioness were much torn by the broken iron and wood, and all the grass and scrub in the vicinity trampled down.

As regards the measurements of lions, the remarks I have made upon the subject of measuring game, when treating of leopards, equally apply here. Scarcely any two men will measure alike, and the difference on occasions might even amount to as much as 6 inches in a lion-skin. In the following table will be found the measurements of the five largest lions I have shot in this district. Another that I shot near the Magalakwini river was an enormous beast, but I did not obtain his measurements. The incidents connected with its death and the measurements of the dressed skin are given elsewhere. The skin of this one and that of the first I ever shot are still in my possession. The dimensions that I give below were carefully taken with a tape-line as soon as possible after death. In each case the overall length was measured from the tip of the nose, over the mane and the curves of the body, to the tip of the tail-tuft; while the dimensions of the flat skins refer to such after being stripped from the body, but not unduly stretched—except in so far as is unavoidable during the process of skinning—pegs being merely driven in to prevent shrinkage. Either of these skins would stretch another 6 inches, but when the heads are required for mounting, pegging out and stretching must be avoided.

Length over all.		Length in a straight line.		Length of the flat skin.		Mane.	Shoulder height, not including the mane.	Girth of forearm.	Length of skull.
ft.	in.	ft.	in.	ft.	in.		ft.	in.	in.
10	5	9	6	10	10½	Full black	3	7	19
10	3	9	4	10	5½	Heavy dark brown	3	6	18
10	2	9	4	10	7	Full dark brown	...	...	...
9	5	9	0	...	...	Scanty brown	...	...	14½
9	3	...	...	...	...	None	...	18	14

The first on the above list was not skinned until sixteen hours after he had been shot, and the second, until eight and a half hours afterwards. In each case they lay throughout a cold winter night before skinning.

The two largest lionesses I have shot were both splendid beasts: one measured over all 8 feet 7½ inches, with a shoulder

height of 3 feet 3 inches; and the other was 8 feet 6½ inches, height at shoulder 3 feet 2 inches, girth of forearm 15 inches. Notwithstanding the over-all length before skinning was so nearly alike in each case, the flat skins gave very disproportionate measurements, the first being 9 feet 2 inches and the second 8 feet 10¾ inches.

In the following chapters I purpose recounting some incidents of the sport I have enjoyed in the pursuit of this grandest of game; and may I hope that the reader who has honoured these pages by perusal thus far, and who perchance has felt some interest in the descriptions of the wild sport which I have endeavoured to portray, will grant me attention for a little while longer; and, if he be a sportsman, that he will refill his cartridge-belt, and accompany me yet farther to where we can meet and try conclusions with the mighty lion in his bush-veldt solitudes?



"There was danger menacing him from other quarters."

CHAPTER XX.

LION-HUNTING.

Reminiscences—The 'Magalakwini—Roan antelopes shot—Building a *scherm*—Lion's spoon—A griffin—Night-watching—A ghoul—The sentimentalist again—Burchell's zebra—A cautious advance—Koodoo bull—In danger—Too late—The lion's attack—Proclaiming his success—First shot at a lion—A pitiable sight—My first lion—Not eaten up—Lions at a hartebeeste—Ostrich shot—A rough spot—"Look at the lions!"—Missed—A hard run—P—— prefers his horse—"Daar leg hij!"—An ugly customer—"Wacht maar!"—Contemplating a charge—Dead—A magnificent lion—Oryx dies—They needed it—Welcome news—Makatsha's kraal—A man-eater—Incomprehensible—A night-watch—Inspired with fear—"I' ngenile!"—A flare-up—Feeling small—Outwitted—How it happened—Between Scylla and Charybdis—"Choked off"—A confident grey-beard—Try again—"Aa-ow"—Marked agility—A climbing lioness—Advance and retreat—A pot-shot—Credible witnesses—On my mettle—The reason why—Tracked to her lair—The last act—Ill-assorted companions—An awkward position—A dangerous brute—Odds too great—A telling "clop"!—A charge from the reeds—A leap for life—Game to the last—An insignificant brute—Having their revenge—The Malau district—Lions on the track—Undignified retreat—A "hash"—An uncomfortable seat—The Metford rifle—An exciting time—Friendly company—Discovered—The lion leaves—Threatening my rear—Tit-bits—A shot at the lioness—The lion returns—Leaves again—Dawn—Two mistakes—Rover in his element—"Are you satisfied?"—My largest lioness—A buried tail—Return to the waggons.

THERE are probably few African sportsmen who have shot lions in their time who cannot recall to mind the occasion of their introduction to this grand beast, while even yet more vividly will be impressed upon their memories the incidents connected with the death of the first they killed. It is years ago now—

20th October 1878—since I stood exultant by the dead body of my first lion (and the second only that I had seen in the country), but there is not one single incident that occurred upon that successful day, or rather night, but I can recall it with most vivid distinctness.

I had thrown in my lot with a Boer hunting-party under one Pretorius—who had been exceedingly kind to me when I lay ill in the veldt with fever and dysentery—and we were camped at the time on the west bank of the 'Magalakwini river, about nine miles south of the Silikwana Kopjes, and close to the confluence of a small reedy tributary and its larger sister stream. Notwithstanding that the surrounding country was very dry, arid, and sandy, game was plentiful enough on the new "burns" throughout the forests of low thorn-bush, and along the more thickly-wooded banks of the beautiful 'Magalakwini. The water was very low in the creek, as the rains were only just setting in—in fact little better than a succession of long narrow pools, connected with each other by little insignificant tricklings, which in many places were invisible on the sandy surface.

Upon that, to me, ever memorable day I had been over with E——, one of our party, to the ridge of low kopjes, lying away at the back of our camp, where we had been successful in bagging two fine roan antelope bulls (decidedly scarce in the vicinity) and a hartebeeste, one of the former and the latter falling to E——'s rifle, the other roan antelope to mine. We had noticed that game spoor was very plentiful about the upper end of the reedy creek, near which our camp was pitched, and that most of it apparently came from and returned towards the hills; so I suggested to my companion that we should make *schermes*, and endeavour to get a shot at something by moonlight, at the water-holes—proposing not to stay out much after midnight, as I was still weak and knocked up, the result of my dose of fever. In returning towards the waggons we struck over in the direction of the creek, and followed its reed-lined banks down towards camp, searching for a likely-looking place from which to watch during the night. I soon found a spot to my liking, by one of the longest and widest of the pools, where in and out of the reeds, which grew in great profusion on both sides of the stream, game-spoor was plentiful.

Not being desirous of returning to the spot before it was time to take up my watch, as it was already getting late in the afternoon, I made no delay in getting to work with my knife, and cutting down some reeds wherewith to construct a small *scherm* close to the water, from which, when the few intervening stalks were removed, I could command a good view of anything approaching the pool on the opposite bank from the direction of the hills. My companion did not appear to trouble himself very much about a *scherm*, but said he would watch from a little group of thorn-trees which grew near the water at the spot where we had crossed the creek, and where the belt of reeds was very narrow. However, he assisted me, stolidly smoking his pipe the while, but it struck me at the time that he was not at all keen about the job, and, since I have come to know the fraternity better, I am sure he was not. When we had finished the *scherm* we walked together towards the horses, which we had left outside on the edge of the reeds; and just as E—— came up with his, and stooped to pick up the reins, he stopped suddenly, then called to me, "Alle de wereld! kijk hier K——, kijk de leeuw zijn spoor!" ("All the world! look here, K——, look at the lion's spoor.") "Lion's spoor, never!" thought I, but there was no mistaking those silent witnesses, deeply imprinted in the damp sand, which told us that not many hours before his majesty had passed that way. Now I was naturally very anxious to shoot a lion, for I was then in my griffinage; yet, desirous as I may have been of bringing this about, I will frankly admit that my anxiety did not carry me so far as to wish for an introduction at night, and alone.

I had already seen one, and the sight naturally enough had whetted my appetite, and I used to lie awake at nights listening to their deep music, and wondering when and how my first fair chance would come of a shot at this royal game. How valiant I intended to prove myself on the occasion! But I had it all "cut and dried" that the meeting was to be by daylight, a morning call as it were; and now here was a possible chance, but by night! I already felt a little less valiant, but as there were numbers of lions about, and this particular one might only be wandering around like the rest, and was then probably miles away, I took heart of grace.

We made the best of our way back to camp, distant about two miles, where we found all our party just mustering for a meal, and we were not sorry to cut in, after giving our nags over in charge of a boy, and washing the dust from our throats with two large kommetjes-full of unsweetened coffee. At last the sun, hurrying towards its setting, proclaimed it time for us watchers to be on the move; and as its last beams were lighting up the waving tops of the acacias and the serried peaks of the distant line of kopjes with that glow of warm Indian red so peculiar to the sunsets of the southern hemisphere, we set out, three in number (P—— having agreed to join us), for our night-watch, but not without having to endure a considerable amount of pleasant chaff from the others about lions and suchlike. It was arranged that E—— and P—— should sit together at the upper pool, as I much preferred to be alone. It was getting dusk when we reached a clump of small bush which marked the lower end of the large water-hole at which I was to sit; and I turned off along the bank, leaving my companions to go on together to a spot about 400 yards distant. I tramped about a good deal through the reeds before I could hit off the place where I had made my *scherm*, actually passing and repassing it several times, and all the while conjuring up in my imagination the forms of more than one lurking lion. At last I came on to the spot quite accidentally, and very soon settled down, seating myself on the end of a blanket and drawing the other end up over my head, for the night was intensely cold. It was two days past the full moon, so for over an hour I sat in monotonous silence, the stillness of the night alone broken by the occasional tittering of a troop of jackals somewhere away in the direction of camp; and once by the weird shriek of some ghoul-like hyæna which passed behind, and evidently winded some of us, as he made off at once amongst the thorn-trees far out on the flats, where he again lifted up his voice.

At last up rose the glorious moon—slowly and majestically as became the queen of night—over the tree-tops, and ere long all the surrounding expanse of grass and bush-land was illumined with her silver rays.

The reeds opposite to me, on the other side of the pool, and about 20 yards distant, were very thick and dark, but a broad

game-path led down through them, upon which, as the moon climbed higher in the heavens, her rays shone brilliantly, as upon the broken and trampled reeds close to the water's edge. When she was a little over half an hour up, I heard in the distance the deep guttural sigh of a lion, low and sullen, and repeated at long intervals. What my feelings were *then* upon hearing the sound I will not discuss; but nowadays I think that it is the very grandest music one can listen to when camping in the wilds. I never hear it without a thrill of keen excitement, and perhaps something of awe; yet can lie awake hour after hour listening to the enchanting sound, as it echoes loud and deep through the dark forest or along the reed-margined rivers. It may again be only the opinion of the sentimentalist—that I cannot help—but at any rate it is sentiment with a very great deal of matter-of-fact reality about it; for, strange to say, the lowest, most distant notes of a lion are at once heard by me, even if, as I imagine, I have been fast asleep. Sometimes I hear them, but am not conscious of waking; yet on asking the boys in the morning, "Were not the lions roaring over in such and such a direction during the night?" the answer invariably is "Yes."

After a while I heard some animals rushing off on the far edge of the reeds across the stream; and their catchy cry of "Kwa-ha, kwa-ha, kwa-ha!"—

"The timorous quagga's shrill whistling neigh"—

sounded sharp and clear under the moonlight, as they raced away from some real or fancied danger.

At last, when it was getting on for midnight, I heard a sound in the reeds opposite, as of some creature approaching the water. Its advance, however, was so cautious that only at rare intervals could I hear the snapping of dry reeds, and a swishing sound as of something brushing through the feathery-headed canes. Then the movement as suddenly ceased, and once I fancied that away down-stream, between me and the camp, I heard again the low deep sigh of the lion; but though I listened attentively it was not repeated. I was getting very excited over it, not having as yet learned to take things coolly under such circumstances; but very soon all my attention was fully occupied, and the excitement of suspense ended. A loud sound

of cracking reeds reached me, nearer and nearer it came, a step at once bold but cautious; it advanced to about the centre of the bed of reeds and there stopped. I was afraid every instant lest my friends should fire and scare away anything that might be approaching; but again another advance was made, accompanied by a short faint "bark." With my rifle—a single .577 Express by Holland & Holland—on full cock, and my finger almost touching the trigger, I waited breathlessly and silently, or as silently as the thumping of my heart against my ribs would allow.

Then a step fell on the hard hollow canes, the reeds swayed and trembled, a dark form appeared on the opposite bank, and as it moved another pace forward into the full glare of the moonlight, which shone brilliantly upon its broad back and spiral horns, a splendid bull koodoo stood before me. I could even distinguish the white markings on its face as it stood near the edge of the reeds, turning slightly and looking upstream, with his large round ears thrown forward as if he had caught some sound that my duller ones had missed. But there was danger menacing him from other quarters, though apparently he suspected neither, till, in trying to alter my position slightly, I clumsily knelt on some reeds inside the *scherm*. The noise thus made caused him to start suddenly and stare hard in my direction, and as there seemed no chance of a broadside shot, and I was afraid each moment he would jump away, I was on the point of firing at his chest, when a shot fell sharp and clear on my left, in the direction my friends had taken, followed after a second's pause by two more. I was too late, for before my unpractised eye could catch the foresight properly the old bull wheeled round, and, with his horns laid back, vanished into the reeds. Scarcely had they closed behind him, and the exclamation of disappointment left my lips, when there came a quick rush, a muffled roar, and the old bull fell crashing and struggling amongst the reeds with a great lion's fangs buried in his throat. Though the intervening reeds prevented me from actually seeing the attack, these were all crushed down as the lion and his victim fell together, and I could then distinctly make out the lion lying on the prostrate body of the koodoo.

There was but little struggle after they fell ; the deep agonised bellowing of the koodoo grew fainter and fainter, then became a mere choking gurgle ; and the cruel tearing of the lion's fangs and claws was the only audible sound ; two or three convulsive kicks of the hind-legs, and the lion, licking the clotted blood from his lips with great rough tongue, leaves the still quivering body of his victim lying stark under the clear, cold moonlight. Striding forward a few paces, he stands, with tufted tail twitching from side to side, and slightly raising his great broad head, dappled red with the life-blood of his victim, glares long and earnestly up-stream in the direction in which my friend's shots had fallen ; then, uttering quick, deep, guttural notes, again strides back to where lay the koodoo, now quite dead. A few moments' silence, painful in their intensity, then, with tail held straight and lowered head,—lowered till the great mane sweeps the sand,—he breaks out into loud, deep-toned roars of triumph, drawing in his breath after each, with deep sighs, till the air is full of great volumes of sound, such as I have seldom heard since, and the very earth trembles as peal follows peal in quick succession. Now walking to the pool about 20 yards above the dead koodoo, he stoops his maned head and neck, and laps loudly and long ; then suddenly standing up, stares hard in my direction for a second or two, with eyes like living fire, and turning, walks over to the koodoo, and lies down behind it. An impressive scene, and one that will remain fixed in my memory to the end of my days !

I had a good chance of a shot when the lion was at the water, though he was then rather far, and the sight on my rifle bothered me a lot ; besides, I had scarcely regained the confidence which I am afraid I had in a measure lost during the savage onslaught of the lion. But my mind was fully made up to take the next fair chance that offered ; unfortunately, when he lay in the shade of the reeds, and half hidden behind the body of the koodoo, it was almost impossible to see him distinctly enough to enable me to fire, so moving very cautiously, I rose from my kneeling position to try and secure a better view. Of course some of the dry reeds cracked, and the sound, slight though it was, was heard by the lion, for he sprang up at once, and grunting hoarsely, trotted along the edge of the reeds, and stood again

more directly opposite to me than he had been previously. At last! It was my first chance at a lion, and when, as I nervously pressed the trigger, and in answer to the heavy report of the rifle came the sounds of awful struggles, and the deep savage growling of the wounded brute, as he fell with his back broken on the edge of the reeds, I think my delight at my success overcame all feelings of pity I might otherwise have felt for the stricken creature, but a moment before so full of savage life and conscious strength! It is a pitiable sight indeed, a lion with a broken back: the awful but impotent rage—the flashing eyes filled with mad fury—the choking roars, expressive of racking pain as well as of fiery anger—the great struggles to raise itself from the ground—while the white fangs, now blood-stained from the torn and bitten tongue, crush and tear everything within reach!

I had lost no time in slipping another cartridge into my rifle, as I did not know where I had hit the lion, and thought quite possibly he might attack; but as he still lay rolling and kicking on the ground, I crept out of the *scherm* and advanced a few paces to get another shot at him. Just then I heard my friends shout to me—evidently from close at hand—but I had eyes and ears for naught but the struggling monster on the sand opposite. Again they shouted just as the rifle was at my shoulder—a flash, a loud report, and with a gasping roar my first lion fell on to its side dead.

Five minutes later I was standing by the body, where, after a considerable amount of shouting, I was joined by my friends. “Machtig! maar gij is gelukkig; hoe het gij hem geschieten?” (“Almighty! but you’re lucky; how did you shoot him?”) was their first greeting, and I—who perhaps was nothing loath—had to go through the whole performance again, as well as our respectively limited knowledge of each other’s language would allow. They told me that they had killed a young roan antelope bull, and wounded a cow; and having heard the roaring of the lion, and my shot following quickly afterwards, they came over at once, half expecting, I think, to see the “Engelschman opgevreten” (eaten up), until they were reassured by hearing my second shot.

I had very nearly missed the lion with my first shot, the back

being broken about the middle of the dorsal vertebræ; with the second I had hit him in the ear. He carried a full dark brown mane, and was a fair average lion in point of size; but I had no means of measuring him accurately at the time: the dressed skin, however, measures 9 feet 8 inches. We did not stop to skin him that night, but covered him and the koodoo up, and returned to camp; though none of us slept much before the dawn summoned us to another day's work.

In the morning, after skinning both animals, we followed up the wounded roan antelope, and found it half-eaten by vultures. Some of our party went with a waggon to the spot where we had shot the bulls on the previous morning, and found that lions had eaten at the hartebeeste, but had left when, guided by the circling vultures, the Boers rode up, and had apparently made for the line of kopjes behind the camp.

Only twelve days afterwards I had the good fortune to come across another male lion and kill it. I had no horse of my own at the camp, being indebted to the kindness of my Boer friends for the occasional use of one of theirs. However, I did not mind that, for if anything I preferred foot-hunting. On the day in question all the horses but one (which had a bad sore back) were in use, so I went off on foot, accompanied by a Kafir and a Bastard boy, heading for the line of kopjes where koodoo were plentiful—my mounted friends going away in two parties in a northerly direction. I saw any amount of game that day, but shot very badly during the morning. At mid-day, however, when scrambling over a low stony neck in the hills, we started a fine koodoo bull and several cows, and I was lucky enough to drop the bull at about 200 yards. Thence, after covering him up, we made our way across country to a single low kopje on the edge of a low brack "pan," over which we saw a large number of vultures flying. I thought these might possibly indicate lions (I was very keen now on lions!), but on approaching the kopje we saw three of the Boers just riding away, coming nearly in our direction. They rode over towards us at once, when I learned that they had shot two koodoo bulls, a wildebeeste, and four hartebeeste. E—, P—, and H— were still away, having remained by the koodoos, and Pretorius, his son, and another Boer were returning to camp when they

met me. So I at once decided to accompany them back, the Bastard boy being started straight away to camp with instructions to inspan one of the waggons, and bring it out to ride the meat on. The Boers rode slowly, so that I could keep pace with them, and we struck off towards the long stony ridge covered with low scrub and a few scattered thorn-trees, at the far end of which I had shot the koodoo at mid-day; and after crossing over a horribly rough and rocky "neck," we came on to a small troop of koodoo cows—the same, I think, that had been running with the bull which I had shot, as they had come down in that direction after I fired. The ground was particularly stony, and sloped steeply down towards a narrow but deep bushy donga, into which the koodoo ran. We could not get along quickly, but were picking our way through the stones very carefully, when young P——'s horse suddenly stopped and stood staring hard at something away to our right. Almost instantly we caught sight of two large objects moving away over some rough ground by the edge of the donga; and as we looked they broke into a trot, ran a little way, then stood and looked back at us.

"Kijk daar de leeuws!" and "Look at the lions!" was whispered excitedly in the *taal* and in Saxon English, as we recognised them to be a fine lion and lioness. They were about 250 yards away, and as the ground was so rough that the horses could not have come up to them, P—— senior at once jumped to the ground and fired quickly. We could not see the bullet strike, but the lions did not move, though they sprang off before the next shot was fired at them, which struck short. The lions made off towards the lower end of the donga, in which direction the two elders of the party at once rode off. I ran as hard as I could through the donga, giving the Kafir my rifle to carry, and young P——, leaving his horse, followed me on foot, the donga being too steep to cross with the horse. A low ridge of sandhills appeared on the horizon to the south, and towards them I felt sure the lions were making, as it did not seem likely they would remain in the donga. By cutting across in that direction I hoped possibly to fall in with them again. There was also a chance that if they had remained in the bush the Boers might disturb them, when they would certainly run through on to my side. Eh, but I did run that day, till at last I had to pull up under a

thorn-tree to recover my wind, and await the arrival of my friend, who came along very slowly! Then we again pushed forward, running and walking alternately, till we reached the head of a little dry spruit, a branch of the larger creek into which the lions had run. I then climbed into a tree and had a good look round, but could not see anything, and P—— at once decided to go back for his horse, saying he would rejoin me immediately.

However, I could not wait, but crossed the creek with my boy, and after a short scramble over some more very rough ground, covered with a nasty low, thorny shrub, about $2\frac{1}{2}$ feet in height, and which tickled us up considerably, we found ourselves close up against the sandhills, which were very broken and irregular just here, but formed quite a considerable ridge a little farther on. Both the boy and I now climbed into a tree again, to see if anything was in sight; but no! not a sign of life, save a scampering steinbuck which got up close at hand; and I came to the conclusion that the two Boers had either gone away on the spoor, which might have turned down one or other of the many dry bushy dongas that cut up the country in all directions, or else had given up the search, and crossed back through the kopjes in the direction of camp. I now took my rifle from the boy, and walked up close to the sandhills, through some straggling thorn-bush, intending to skirt them right along, and see if the spoor had crossed; failing success, we could strike back towards the kopjes, crossing many of the dongas on our way, in one of which perhaps, by an off-chance, we might come across the lions.

We walked about 50 yards apart, and had covered perhaps 200 yards, keeping along the base of the sandhills, when suddenly the boy called to me, "*Kijk, baas, daar leg hij!*" ("*Look, baas, there he lies!*"), and at once jumped up on to a fallen tree, pointing excitedly to my right front. I now saw the lion for the first time, as he walked out from behind a small patch of bush about 200 yards distant, and trotted away in the direction of the sandy ridge. I ran as hard as I could to intercept him, and at about 140 yards fired, and missed, sending a shower of sand over him. He gave a low growl, stood an instant, then turning suddenly round, jerked his tail in the air, and came

walking straight towards me, his great bowed legs giving an idea of marvellous strength, and his fine mane completely covering his fore-quarters. He came on with his head held low, and growling incessantly. When he was about 80 yards distant, I saw P—— come galloping up; the lion saw him too, and slightly turned his head to look at him, but I fired at once; with a savage growl he stumbled heavily forward, angrily biting at his fore-shoulder, which appeared to be broken. I expected him to charge at once, instead of which he lay down, still facing us, and growling continuously. As P—— came up, "Wacht maar," he said, "laat ons alle twee schieten toen hij opstaat!" ("Wait a bit, let us both shoot together when he stands up!") We had not long to wait, for as P—— jumped from his horse the lion sprang up instantly, and with head lowered between the great shoulders, till his tangled mane completely hid the fore-quarters, his black lips drawn back in a savage snarl, and his tail held straight and stiff, he eyed us intently; in another instant I believe he would have been on to us, but the reports of our rifles rang out simultaneously, and he lurched forward, then rolled over on his side, dead. My first bullet had broken the near fore-leg just above the knee, the second had entered between the neck and shoulder, and broken up in the lungs,—the hollow bullets were too light, and lacked penetration. P——'s bullet had caught him in the corner of the eye, and smashed into the brain: he was using the old-style Westley-Richards lifting-block rifle, with paper cartridges—and Al weapons they were too! He was much disappointed at losing the first chance at the lion by going back for his horse, but said he had been quite unable to keep up with me on foot.

This proved to be a much larger lion than the first I had shot, in fact one of the largest I have ever bagged; the dressed skin measures 10 feet 10 inches. He carried a full dark-brown mane, and one of the canine teeth was broken off close to the gums. As we failed to discover the lioness, we were of course not quite certain that this was actually the lion seen at first, though I think most probably it was, as it is not usual to find these animals moving about during the day unless disturbed. We skinned the lion off, and carried the skin, with the head and paws attached, back to camp on P——'s horse, a load to which he strongly ob-

jected for a long time, but eventually made the best of a bad job, and carried it quietly.

We found the rest of the party at camp when we arrived; they said they had seen nothing of the lions, but had held the spoor some distance till it entered some rough ground, when they gave it up. They had, however, ridden along the base of the kopjes, thinking possibly the lions had taken refuge amongst them, where of course every yard they rode took them farther and farther in the wrong direction.

During the season of 1889 I was shooting down on the western side of the Libombo range, in company with some friends, and at its close—having obtained very fair sport, and a goodly collection of head and horn trophies—we were about to trek out. I had remained in camp one day, partly to put some finishing touches to a head I was preserving, and partly on account of the illness of my favourite shooting-horse, Oryx, who had run his last race, and died at 2 P.M. that day.

During the morning two of our waggon-drivers had left the camp and gone over to some Kafir kraals—situated in a bend of the Nguanetsi river at its junction with the Makambana—about nine miles distant, to endeavour to obtain some leaf-tobacco from the natives. For the past fortnight these Kafirs had been in the habit of constantly passing to and fro between their location and our camp, in order to take away the meat which we had to dispose of in alarming quantities; and, poor beggars, they looked as though they needed it! Our driver returned about 4 P.M. with the welcome news that a well-known lioness had, on the previous night, made a raid upon the kraal and carried off two dogs; she had also killed a goat there a few days previously. The Kafirs had followed the spoor a little way, in a half-hearted sort of manner, but without success; having, I suppose, looked for her, and prayed heaven the while that they would not find her. This was altogether too good an opportunity to let slip, as I had been singularly unfortunate that season with lions, only having fallen across one, which I wounded, but owing to an enormous grass-fire was unable to find. I recovered the skin long afterwards, the animal having been found dead by a Boer who was camped close to where I shot it, and who handed it over to me upon my giving him something for looking after it.

I therefore made arrangements to go over to the location next day, and try to get a shot at the lioness by night, though the young moon promised little assistance. Accordingly about 3 P.M. I started out, accompanied by Muntumuni and Mvelafuti, and reached the kraal by sundown, where, after a cup of black coffee and a slice of cold giraffe-tongue, I set about the necessary preparations for my watch.

I will here describe the situation of the kraal, as it is necessary to a clear understanding of the events which followed. It consisted of three groups of huts, eight or nine in each, and was built on a wide promontory formed by a sharp bend of the Ngua-netsi river, into which, nearly in the middle of the bend, the smaller Makambana flowed. The nearest group of huts was at the end of the promontory, distant on one side about 50 yards from the river, and in front 120 yards: this group belonged to Makatsha himself, a mean-looking, wizened old Tonga. The next group was 150 yards farther up towards the middle of the bend, and the third another 200 yards beyond that, nearly abreast of the junction of the two rivers. Both these, like the first group, were placed about 120 to 150 yards from the river in front, all the intervening space consisting of cultivated ground. The bush around the first two groups of huts was fairly open, a great quantity of it having been cut down for firewood and building purposes; but the third group stood amongst a quantity of very dense thorny scrub and bush.

Upon making inquiries I learned that the lioness had been prowling around the kraals on the previous night, but had taken nothing, though I could get no two who were agreed upon the direction in which she went off. I ascertained, however, a fact which made me more than ever anxious to bring her to book—viz., that she was a veritable man-eater,—the only one of her kind that I have ever had anything to do with. Her first escapade in that direction was to attack a woman returning from the mealie-gardens, whom she knocked down, and seizing her child—which according to custom was carried on the mother's back—make off with it, and devoured it at leisure in the bush. Only the previous year, the Kafirs told me, when some of their number were living at another kraal about two miles distant and now deserted, this lioness had seized a woman and carried her off, her

remains being found a few days later near the river. She had, indeed, become a perfect terror; every one in the kraal seemed to move about as if in dread of their lives; though the easy nonchalant manner in which they put up with it as the work of an '*mtakati*, or evil spirit, was astounding. It will give a better idea of how utterly prostrated and helpless these lazy, sluggish people had become under the burden thus laid upon them, when I state that the lair of this lioness was within 300 yards of the kraals, and she made but little attempt at concealment or strategy, visiting the kraal before or about midnight almost every night, regularly; and yet amongst all the Kafirs there, they could not muster a hunting-party to go out and give her battle!

My boys had brought over with them a large piece of evil-smelling flesh, the hind-leg of a Burchell's zebra, and I had this carefully dragged round the kraals, leaving pieces here and there as "appetisers," tying the remainder securely with riems to an old stump, in a broad, open clearing half-way between the kraal and the river. To make assurance doubly sure, having obtained a young goat from Makatsha, I tied it at the lower end of a large tree which had been chopped down, about 15 or 20 yards distant from the bait; and at sundown, wrapped in an ulster, took up my post at the other end of this fallen tree, amongst the thorny branches, where a forked limb that ran out afforded me a good seat, with my feet just clear of the ground, the broken, thorny twigs forming a substantial screen in front. Acting upon my instructions, every one in the kraal retired quickly to rest, as I was given to understand the lioness frequently put in an appearance between the hours of 9 and 10 P.M. However, until past midnight a deathly silence reigned over everything, particularly suggestive of the fear with which the lioness had inspired the unfortunate occupants of the village. Even the poor little goat seemed too frightened to bleat; though once, when a couple of large spotted hyænas made their appearance, it cried out plaintively. So provokingly close did these brutes come that I was forced to throw sticks at them to drive them off.

About 1 A.M. the silence of the night was broken by a loud shout, away at the huts in the bush; then followed such a yelling, screaming row that one might have fancied a troop of

lions had taken the place by storm. I could clearly distinguish the words "I ngenile! i ngenile!" ("It has got in!"), and then I knew that, after all, the cunning brute had outwitted me. Suddenly bright lurid flames shot up into the darkness, followed by a louder burst of yelling and screaming, as the fire blazed up brighter and brighter, and the crackling sparks fell thickly around, till I could see the dusky forms running to and fro, and hither and thither, like ants on a hot day. The night was too dark and the chances too risky for me to care to leave my post, so with renewed watchfulness I waited on, wondering what the deuce had happened, and feeling, if the truth be told, very small. As matters quieted down again in another half-hour, I felt convinced that it had only been a scare, and that no great harm had been done.

At dawn, becoming uncommonly cold in the raw morning air, and thinking the lioness had certainly decamped for *that* night at any rate—though how little had I measured the cunning of the brute!—I shouldered the goat and went back to the kraal, and was soon enjoying a cup of hot coffee. I had been sitting smoking and talking to my boys for nearly half an hour, when Mvelafuti, raising his hand, said, "I think I heard something outside the kraal, then." Remembering the hyænas, I took my rifle and went out with him, only to find, to my astonishment, upon approaching my lair, that the meat I had tied to the stump was gone, a few chewed ends of the riems alone remaining. We searched in vain for spoor on the sun-baked ground, and were forced to the conclusion that, after all, the hyænas had secured a meal at my expense; for not then did we discover who was the actual culprit.

From the Kafirs in the central group of huts, who had all the fun to themselves during the night, we learned that the lioness broke in through the fence—I have omitted to state that each group of huts was surrounded by a substantial fence of *'mkaya*, or wait-a-bit thorns—and commenced deliberately tearing the grass off one of the huts, which contained a man, two women, and two children, who most miraculously escaped. Their shouts roused the other natives, one of whom threw a burning brand at the lioness, which caught the dry thatch. It blazed up immediately, the lioness making off in the confusion.

I felt more than ever determined at all costs to settle accounts with the daring brute ; and as it was necessary for me to go over to my camp at once to see to the loading of the waggons, I arranged to return again in the evening, and watch by the kraal which the lioness had last entered. Accompanied by a crowd going over to the camp to get meat, I reached the waggons early, occupying the day in assisting my friends to load up, and making everything ready for an early start in the morning. In the evening I again set out for the kraals with my two boys and a large contingent of women-folk laden with meat ; but I did not stay long with them, for between the "high" meat and their own seldom-washed and odoriferous persons, the combined production literally "choked me off," and I had to leave them ungallantly to their own devices, and push on with my two Swazis. Upon reaching the kraal we found a gang of about twenty Shangana Kafirs, who were on their way to the coast, and had begged a night's lodging from old Makatsha. They said they intended to sleep outside the kraal in the sort of courtyard (*esanguweni*) around the main entrance, in which the kraal-folk sit and lounge about during the mornings and evenings. When I asked one old greybeard if he was tired of life, and did not wish to see the sun rise next day, he answered, "Qa, imbubi iza'u saba tina, si 'baningi !" ("No, the lion will be afraid of us, for we are many !") He altered his tune by midnight !

I took up my position near the farthest group of huts this time, in company with a "crawling" piece of meat and a tethered goat, sitting under a rough thatched shelter open on all sides, in which the Kafirs used to hang the mealie-cobs to dry ; but so far as I was concerned the night passed as uneventfully as the preceding one. There is no doubt that this too-cunning wretch was perfectly aware of my presence on both occasions, and suspected a trap, as she was quite unaccustomed to seeing any one outside of a hut, let alone out in the bush, after dark ; so she drew her own conclusions, which were not far from the truth, I suspect.

But back at Makatsha's huts, where I had watched on the first night, they had all the excitement to themselves. About midnight the lioness, as keen as ever, and probably entertaining a very poor opinion of my generalship, again turned up, the

moment of her arrival being made known to me by the shouting and general stampede which took place amongst the Shanganas, each of whom vied with the other in displaying his agility at clambering over, through, and under thorn-fences! If one could only have seen it, I fancy the face of that over-confident greybeard would have been a picture, as he struggled through the fence, when the first low, deep "Aa-ow!" reached his ears.

Thorn-fences were a mere detail, however, in the opinion of this lioness, for, foiled in her attempt to "lift" the greybeard or one of his companions, she got round to the other side of the kraal, and caught sight—or scent—of the tempting-looking strips of giraffe, hartebeeste, and wildebeeste *biltong* hanging up in a large 'mganu-tree just inside the thorn-fence. This was indeed an unlooked-for piece of good fortune, and she did not hesitate to take advantage of it. Dashing through the fence, she reached the lowest fork of the tree—nearly 8 feet from the ground—at one bound, whilst the terror-stricken natives crouched closer round their fires, and left her to work her own sweet will upon their much-prized larder. Swiftly and easily she ascended the tree, branch by branch, eating the meat as she came across it, finally lying out upon a large horizontal bough, which hung red with choice pieces of *biltong*. At this juncture one of the natives, whose hut was close by, possessing himself with short-lived courage, crept out of the door, musket in hand, and carefully shutting his eyes, and pointing his antiquated weapon somewhere in the direction of the tree, pulled the trigger. Needless to say, he did not stop to see the result of his shot; and perhaps it was just as well he did not, for he had barely entered and slammed to the hut door when the lioness sprang down, and with a low growl advanced towards the hut. Barely 10 feet from the hut door she stood on a heap of ashes, where myself I saw her spoor in the morning; and I think it was just a toss up whether she attacked the hut or not! Probably, however, seeing no one, and fully convinced that she had scared the native far more than he had scared her, she retired, and again climbing the tree, resumed operations upon the meat! If only I had been in the kraal, what a splendid chance would have been mine for a "pot-shot"; but the grand scuffle that closed her career was worth a thousand such pot-shots! Having finished the meat,

she climbed down, and coolly retreated through the gap in the fence which she had made on entering.

The whole performance was so daring, so incredible I had almost said, that on my return to this kraal at daylight I examined the spot where it took place most carefully. Her spoor was distinctly visible in the heap of ashes outside the hut door, and there also at a height of from 18 to 20 feet from the ground were her claw-marks in the soft bark of the *'nganu*-tree; and there was not a single strip of meat left on any of the branches. I feel convinced that there are some who read this who will almost instinctively look around for a pinch of salt as an aid to digestion; but I can assure such doubters that I relate facts, and that salt is not necessary in the process of deglutition. My friends W—— and M—— saw and closely examined the tree themselves a few hours later, and will bear willing testimony to the truth of my statements, extraordinary as they seem.

But come, whilst we are wasting time in idle talk the lioness is probably laughing to herself at our discomfiture; but as "they laugh best who laugh last," she may not have everything entirely her own way after all. And had she but known it, she had paid her final visit in life to that kraal; this crowning act of impudent daring was to be her last.

It had become very evident that I was going altogether the wrong way to work to bag her, and possibly I might have watched till doomsday for a shot at her by night, and never have so much as obtained a glimpse of her. Another plan had to be adopted—she must be hunted down by daylight. For two reasons, however, I had been dissuaded from trying this plan at first—the one being that the Kafirs professed such utter ignorance as to her whereabouts, until events led to my discovering this for myself, when they declared, oh yes, they knew all about it! One would have thought they had some superstitious reasons for wishing to shelter the brute, instead of being anxious for her destruction! I was the more inclined to this view of the case, seeing that hitherto none of them would volunteer to accompany me and help to beat her up. Quite possibly these two facts were very nearly related, and they refused to own up to her whereabouts for fear of being forced to beat for her!

Whilst my scanty breakfast was preparing, Muntumuni and I

took up the spoor, and when we left the kraal the perplexed native who had fired at the lioness during the night was still searching for the mark of his bullet in the tree, and perhaps, for all I know, he may be searching still! Unfortunately for herself, the lioness had this time retreated by a different route to that which she usually favoured, keeping to a wide sandy footpath, along which the women-folk passed to and from the water, and upon this we saw her padded spoor very plainly. She had stopped to drink, and then climbed out of the other bank at a very steep place, passed over a stretch of dry grass and stony ground, where spooring was most difficult, and from that across a burnt patch, which she left to enter a second strip of dry grass and jungle, some 200 yards distant from the kraal in a straight line, and close to the bank of an insignificant stream, which joined the Nguanetsi below. This stretch of jungle was about 400 yards in length, and beyond it the country was burnt off; in this cover we believed she certainly was lying up. We might easily have gone round to the far edge of the jungle, and endeavoured to cut her spoor, but I did not wish to risk giving her any warning of our approach, so we at once retraced our steps to the village. Then the natives owned up that this was the strip of jungle she usually lay in, and as soon as I heard that I felt very confident that, failing accidents, before mid-day the lioness would be ours. At last I succeeded in raising three volunteers to accompany my own two boys, and after a sluice and a hasty breakfast (who could sit down leisurely to a meal under such circumstances?) we proceeded together to the spot where we had left the spoor, and the curtain rose upon the last act! Ascertaining beyond question that the lioness had entered and gone up through the strip of jungle, and not crossed through on to the other side, I instructed two boys to go round the edge of the dry grass and light it at all points, the others to take up the spoor and follow it steadily, giving me time to take a round and get ahead of them, about 300 yards up the creek, as it seemed most probable the lioness would try to steal away in the opposite direction to the kraal. I was that day using a single .500 W.R. Express, but only had four cartridges for it: these I had deemed ample for night-work, and had not reckoned on the possibility of having to follow her up by daylight.

The fire burned badly on the lower ground, though higher up the ridge it travelled merrily enough, and before long a reedbuck, two steinbuck, and a duiker were bounding away in front of it, the reedbuck and duiker passing me less than 30 yards distant. The lioness was certainly an awkward companion for such creatures, yet they had evidently been comfortable enough, though lying within 100 yards or so of her. The position I was in required the utmost vigilance, as on my side of the creek the cover was so dense—grass 6 feet high and matted together with creepers and other abominations—that if the lioness came along that way she would be close on top of me before I could see her; but I had a good view across to the other side, where the cover was burnt off, and excellent for shooting over. Cautiously, but surely, the boys held the spoor, in a manner deserving the highest praise, till at last the scent got warm, and they came upon her lair of the previous day. There was no mistaking it, for there lay the clean-picked bones and the pieces of riem with which the meat had been tied up, together with a few other trophies of her nightly forays. Truly she was a dangerously cunning and daring brute! But her days are numbered. The fire closes round, and as she lies in yon patch of thorny jungle, she can hear the sharp, cracking reports of the burning reeds, and sees the wreaths of dark-brown smoke curling along over the grass-tops, while upon the other side of her the voices of the approaching spoorers are audible. Up she starts! See how for a moment a glare lights up in her baleful eyes; her lips are drawn back with a fiendish snarl, disclosing her yellow, broken teeth, and her ears are laid flat back upon her head with threatening gesture. Shall she stand and await the worst? Does she realise how one furious charge would scatter her foes like chaff and open a way of escape for her? No, she deems the odds too great, perhaps instinctively she feels that her fate is sealed; but she will have one try yet for her life, and, lowering her head, she steals off swiftly and silently through a narrow unburnt strip of grass, heading upstream towards the spot where, hidden in the long grass, a glittering rifle-barrel awaits her appearance. The boys caught sight of her as she moved away, and shouted out a warning to me, and next moment I saw her spring up on the bank, on the opposite side of the creek, stalk quickly out into the open ground,



“Up she starts!”

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then when about 20 yards from the bank she turned slightly, and, facing up-creek, halted, her black-tufted tail twitching sharply, intently watching the movements of the boys behind her. Yet again she glanced at the leaping flames, but her heart failed her; cross the open she dare not, any more than she dare face the fire; her only chance of escape seemed to be by keeping up the creek and stealing away in the open bush-country beyond. Her mind made up, she trotted forward again, and when about 150 yards from my post, turned down towards the creek. I was afraid that if she got in among the reeds she would give us some trouble to dislodge her, so although the distance was considerably over lion-shooting range, I resolved to chance it; the bullet told with a loud "clop," and she acknowledged it with a savage growl, and at once jumped back into the reeds. As she appeared badly hit, I ran quickly along the bank, forcing my way through the scrub towards her, at the same time calling to the boys to let them know where she was, and that she was wounded.

When yet 50 yards from the spot where I saw her enter the reeds, a low grating growl, proceeding from the reeds on my left, arrested my steps. I advanced a couple of paces under the spreading branches of a thorn-tree, so as to be better able to see down into the spruit, when again that nasty low growl, and I distinctly saw the reeds quivering and waving as if she were moving through them towards me. I felt the position was critical, and brought my rifle up quickly; but though I had not yet seen her, she had evidently been watching me, for with a grunt she immediately charged straight at me. Barely 20 yards separated us as she sprang up the low bank, but I was ready for her, and fired at once. The 590-grain bullet I was using ought to have effectually stopped her, but it did not; she fell, but instantly regaining her feet, rushed at me again. There was no time to reload, so I dropped my rifle, and exerting all my energies, sprang up at the lowest branch of the tree under which I stood, about 9 feet above me. It was covered with terrible thorns, but I did not feel them at the time; I grasped it and was safe. But it was a near thing, and I think I should have fared badly even as it was, but for the fact that her near fore-shoulder was completely smashed. Growling savagely, she again jumped back into the spruit, and I was not long in drop-

ping to the ground, my hands torn and bleeding, and causing intense pain. I now saw the boys on the other side, and shouted to them to keep back; and, when I had recovered my rifle, I stepped again to the bank, as the lioness struggled up through some bush on to the other side of the creek. I had but one cartridge left, as I dropped one with the rifle in the long grass, and could not wait to look for it.

True to her determination and pluck, she turned round again and stood—when she heard me shout to the boys—with lowered head and gleaming eyes, watching me intently. Just then one of the boys fired and hit her in the hind-leg, and I gave her a shot in the shoulder. She fell over, recovered herself, staggered along a few yards, and fell dead. My boys now ran up, and right pleased they were at our success; and I heartily congratulated them on their perseverance and pluck.

She was an insignificant-looking brute after all, very old, without a sound tooth in her head, terribly torn and scarred all over the body, and her fore-arms, face, and neck stuck full of innumerable *'mkaya* thorn-points. There was a large open wound, over 3 inches in length, on her near hind-paw, whether from fighting or from a hard stake of wood upon which she had trodden we could not decide. The flat skin, after we had stripped it off, measured 8 feet 4 inches; but she looked a small beast, being light, lean, and narrow. She was covered with mange, and her life must long have been a burden to her, though she had contrived to make it burdensome to others at the same time.

My friends came up just after she fell, and we all marched off together with the skin to the kraal. Great were the rejoicings at old Makatsha's that day; and I think if one had been matrimonially inclined on the occasion, he would not have found the old man very difficult to come to terms with concerning some of his dusky daughters or granddaughters. Every one turned out to have a look at the grinning head attached to the skin as it lay on the thorn-fence. We left them all, men and women, hurling many an invective at their once formidable but now ridiculously harmless enemy, while we went to examine the tree into which the lioness had climbed; then when each member of the kraals had done his and her share of dancing round and spitting at the

unfortunate skin, we told our boys to take it to the waggons—which had then reached the outspan on the Nguanetsi—and ourselves followed leisurely, while I remarked to my companions—

“There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
Than are dreamt of in thy philosophy.”

Two days after the death of this notorious lioness, our waggons had crossed the heavy sandy drift of the Manzimtonti river and were trekking W.N.W. over the high watershed which lay between it and the Manyalati river and its tributary streams. All the country round about in the neighbourhood of these two rivers, and of the large tributary, the Malau, is regularly traversed by lions, the thick jungle upon the banks of the latter being a favourite breeding-place of theirs; and from first to last I have enjoyed some good sport about there. From the last drift of the Manzimtonti the track lay along the banks for a distance of about eight miles, when the river took a sharp northerly bend, and we struck out over a wide stretch of almost waterless country—two good treks with waggons. This distance we intended to accomplish through the night, trekking on in the evening to a spot where, in a deep hole in the ground, some inferior water could sometimes be obtained, and finishing the remainder of the journey to the Mklowi river in the morning. Accordingly we had inspanned just before sundown, but the sun had set, the brief twilight had given place to darkness—the moon was in its last quarter—and yet we seemed as far off the water as ever.

Whilst trekking along near sundown, W—— and I had been off the track on foot to look for game, he to the right and I to the left of the waggons; but he rejoined them before dark. I still kept on, as I had wandered some distance, and it was 9 P.M. before I struck the track, luckily very close to the waggons, which I could hear coming on behind me. The Scotch cart was about 100 yards in advance of the waggons, and I waited for it to come up; the driver then asked me to walk a little ahead of the front oxen, on the track, so as to enable the *voorlooper* (leader) to see which way to go. This I did, and had proceeded for about a mile, walking slowly, smoking and humming snatches of songs, when suddenly there

was a tremendous commotion in the rear, boys shouting and exclaiming, and dogs barking their loudest. I was about to call out to ascertain what was wrong, when the deep hoarse growling of a lion rose above all other sounds, and quickly satisfied me upon that point. I ran back at once, in my haste coming into violent contact with a too friendly thorn-bush, and emptying the contents of my pipe into my eyes, completely blinding me for a few moments. When I reached the spot I found my companions standing with a number of the boys round the freshly-killed carcass of a Burchell's zebra, which was lying 20 or 25 yards from the waggon-track, and from which the dogs had just cheived two lions.

These brutes had actually permitted me to walk thus closely past them, lying still as the grave the whole time, so that, but for this alarm, I would not have known there was a lion within a mile of me. They gave no sign even when the Scotch cart passed, and it is probable they would have let the whole turn-out go by without disclosing their presence but for the dogs, which were walking behind the last waggon. Immediately they winded the lions they dashed frantically out, although fully two-thirds of the pack rushed as quickly back again as soon as they found out what they were barking at. Rover—old hero of a hundred fights—however, and Swift, a later acquisition, chased the lions some distance; but the night was pitch-dark, and shooting would have been impossible, though if I had had a blue-light I would certainly have followed them up. So we recalled the dogs and trekked on, outspanning about two miles ahead, and, as it turned out, close to the water-hole we were in search of.

Next morning, at earliest dawn, W—— and I, accompanied by four or five boys, and leading Rover on a chain, returned to the spot where we had disturbed the lions; and, as I anticipated, they were at the carcass; but we never even fired a shot—in fact, made a “hash” of the whole affair. The truth is, we were too many in party, and we lost a magnificent chance. Had I gone, as I usually do, with but one Kafir, I am sure I should have bagged one of them. W—— and I walking abreast, about 10 yards in advance of the boys, caught sight of the carcass at once, and were straining our eyes to get a glimpse of the lions near to it. Meanwhile the boys saw them get up from a patch

of grass about 60 yards farther on in the bush, and of course made so much noise to warn us that the lions cleared at once, and for the life of me I could not see them. We did not slip Rover till too late, but he dashed off at once, and we soon heard him barking defiantly about 400 yards away. We ran on, but the lions kept going farther and farther; the grass was very long, and the bush low and thick, Rover only barking at intervals; and to shorten a long story, we failed to catch sight of them again. We held the spoor some distance, however, into the bend of a heavily-wooded dry donga, but though we fired the grass all round it the lions did not put in an appearance.

I was intensely annoyed at the stupid muddle we had made of the whole affair, and made up my mind to watch for the lions that night. So we returned to camp, breakfasted and inspanned, the waggons going on towards the Manyaleti, whilst I remained behind with three boys and my dog Rover. On returning to the spot I could find no tree anywhere near the kill, and as the bush was close and dense, the risk of lying on the ground was too great; they would have winded me to a certainty. So we chopped the central branches from a low, thick, round thorn-bush, and in the hollow, as it were, thus formed lashed the little camp-stool I had taken from the waggons. It was about 6 feet from the ground when lashed in position, and served my purpose excellently, though it was one of the most uncomfortable seats I ever occupied.

We dragged the kill a little farther into the open, about 30 feet from my bush, as the lions had left it under a small clump of trees, in a position in which, whilst eating at it, they would have been invisible to me. I instructed the boys to make their camp about half a mile back on the track, towards the outspan of the previous night, and to keep Rover with them, chained up. At sundown I took my seat, armed with my good little single Metford—a rifle built for me by Mr Gibbs of Bristol, and by which I swear—the most deadly weapon I have ever yet used upon lions. The moon was only five or six days old, and after she set the night was as dark as ever I remember it.

The first lion came along at a slinging pace about 11.30 P.M., evidently not in the least suspicious, and deeming the customary cautious advance quite unnecessary. The altered position of

the kill was noticed at once, and evidently was not approved of, for after sniffing loudly at it, and uttering a deep grunt or two, the lion seized and quickly dragged it back under the bush, then with another grunt of satisfaction sat down and commenced operations. Its mate shortly afterwards turned up, a loud purr of welcome greeting its arrival, then the two set to work.

Perched upon a camp-stool 6 feet from the ground, and only about 30 feet away from where a pair of these uncanny monsters are ripping, tearing, grinding, and crunching the long night through! Of the many exciting positions in which a sportsman may find himself, few perhaps can equal this one. The darkness, solitude, and inaction—and inaction intensifies excitement—will affect the nerves of any one unlucky enough to possess any. I always feel a creepy sensation at such times, a kind of awesome feeling quite distinct from fear; but it goes away in a few minutes, and one actually gets to feel as though the lions were friendly company.

As I did not expect to get more than one shot, I was anxious to secure the male; but the night was so dark I could not have fired with any accuracy at either, so I had just to wait on for a chance of light, or some movement on their part that should bring them more into the open and nearer to me. I felt sure it was no use waiting till dawn, as having been turned away once at that time from their kill, they would on this occasion leave it while still dark.

They had been feeding for about an hour when some slight movement on my part attracted their attention; they looked up at me, and their glowing eyes caught the reflection from the starry sky and showed up very plainly. Thus they watched for I daresay a quarter of an hour, neither of them moving or uttering a sound. Then one rose with a deep "goom," advanced a pace or two, and again stood looking up, while with beating heart and levelled rifle I watched him closely. But he turned towards the kill again, and when the tearing of flesh was resumed I breathed more freely. Half an hour afterwards one of them got up and went away. Unfortunately, as I afterwards discovered, it was the lion. And so the hours passed by. The lioness ate and lay down, then got up and turned to again; but all the while her mate never returned, and no chance was

afforded me of a shot. I could tell by the diminished ardour with which she attacked the meat, and the unseemly noises she made, that she was getting "full inside," and fearing that after all I might lose both of them, I made up my mind to take the very poorest chance that offered rather than let both get away; and before long the opportunity came. The lioness suddenly stood up, walked a few steps away, grunted deeply several times, then returned and stood looking hard at me, her eyes gleaming like living fire. She remained thus for a minute or two, then, in a lion's usual silent, ghostly fashion, she passed round to the back of my bush. By Jove! I wished myself—well, 6 feet higher then, at any rate. I dare not turn—scarcely dare move a muscle—but with ready rifle awaited her next move. Then I heard her sniffing loudly, and a tearing sound and rustling of bushes, and I at once divined what she was about.

At the boys' request I let them cut off a prime fat junk of the zebra-meat whilst we were fixing things up that afternoon, and they had evidently hung it up on the bush behind my seat and gone away and forgotten it; and now the lioness had discovered it, and evinced a particular fancy for such choice parts. She tore it all down from the bush and ate it on the spot, and in returning towards the kill passed close under my bush. As she walked out in front of me I could see her rather distinctly, and at once got my rifle on her. She heard the slight movement I made, and stopped, looking back at me. At that moment I touched the trigger. A hoarse roar—which at that short distance was positively freezing in its intensity of rage—and a prolonged scuffle followed the shot. I strained my eyes in vain to watch her movements, but could hear her apparently dragging herself along the ground to a spot some 40 feet distant, where, as the spoor in the morning showed, she sat on her haunches, glaring towards me and roaring loudly at intervals. Then she either lay or fell down, and I could no longer hear her at all. For the first time I heard my Rover's deep bark in the distance, and then I felt cool and collected again after the past excitement.

Half an hour afterwards I heard the lion—some 300 yards away, apparently—grunting. He had heard the shot, I suppose, and possibly had my wind, as he was walking about in a half-circle from one side to the other, as if afraid, though

anxious, to approach. At last I heard him coming on, as the lioness evidently did also; for she moved off towards a patch of long grass about 60 yards distant, where she lay silent. The lion came again to the carcass, taking no notice whatever of the wounded lioness. And I confidently expected to get a shot at dawn, for it was now about 3 A.M.; but, to my great disappointment, I soon after heard his retreating steps in the bush. Another half-hour and the chances would have been strongly in favour of my bagging him.

Dawn at last! and right pleased was I once more to be able to stretch my cold numbed feet. I went over to where the lioness had been lying, and then followed the blood-spoor to the edge of the patch of cover which she had entered: a loud roar greeted me, a warning that made me retire more rapidly than gracefully. I then climbed a low tree, but could see nothing of her, as she lay in very long grass; but as she seemed unable to charge, I again approached the patch and threw stones in. She answered each with a growl, but would not show up; and as I did not feel anxious to go into such cover and look for her, I decided to go back and call the boys. When I had gone about 50 yards, I happened to glance round, and saw the lion bounding away through the long grass 150 yards distant. I made the great mistake of firing at him, and the greater one still of missing him. Had I left him alone he would not have gone far before standing, as he was evidently waiting for the lioness; but my bullet evidently went near him, for he set off at a tremendous pace, and though I ran myself dead-beat, I never saw him again.

At the camp I had a cup of coffee, and returned with the boys and Rover to hunt up the lioness. Rover started away at once on the fresh spoor of the lion, so when we reached the patch in which I left the lioness I sent a boy up a tree to see if he could make her out. He said he could see her indistinctly, and was pointing out the position when Rover returned. I called him up at once, gave him the spoor, and entered the cover with him. In an instant he dashed in, and his fierce barking guided me to the spot. The lioness lay half on her side—her hind-quarters evidently injured—striking viciously at the dog, who was dancing frantically round her, and growling loudly without cessation. I slipped round behind her in the long grass and

climbed on to a large ant-heap, at the foot of which she lay. As I reached the top and looked over, the lioness heard me and turned half round, only to be again furiously baited by my plucky dog. A quick report, another shot fell on the clear morning air, and with a stifled grunt and a convulsive tremor throughout her body, the lioness rolled over on her side dead; while Rover, after a final tug at her cheek, quietly lay down beside her, with a look at me as much as to say, "Are you satisfied, master?"

The shot I fired at night had passed down through her back, injuring the lumbar vertebræ, and accounted for her inability to charge.

She was, I think, the largest lioness I have ever shot—a great, powerful, magnificent brute, in splendid condition and with perfect teeth, a trophy well worth a night's watching, though at the time I felt very sore about the lion. Her length over all was 8 feet 7½ inches, the flat skin just as it was stripped off 9 feet 2 inches, shoulder height 3 feet 3 inches.

One curious incident I should mention. These lions had not only buried the entrails of the zebra in the sand, but had also similarly put away the tail—which was torn off at the root—burying it carefully and deeply. A few hairs above ground led to its discovery by my boys.

Much to my regret, we had to leave the lion, as we had a long tramp before us to catch the waggons up, as well as all our paraphernalia to carry; but a lioness brought to bag shortens a long road wonderfully, and before we had even commenced to notice the distance, we caught sight of our camp, and the oxen grazing contentedly upon the old mealie-stalks in a deserted Kafir-garden, on the banks of the Mklowi. The waggons were drawn up under the wide-spreading branches of a large fig-tree, from out whose depths of leafy shade came the constant fluttering and screaming of the beautiful, lively Rüppel's parrots, and the soft cooing of the dainty little Namaqua doves.

We soon had the spoils taken from the tawny lion stretched out upon the sand, with a noisy crowd of natives examining them, whilst I, after a wash and a substantial meal, lit my pipe and sat down to recount the tale of the night's adventure to my comrades.

CHAPTER XXI.

LION-HUNTING (*continued*).

An untimely end—Propitious—"The best-laid schemes o' mice and men," &c.—An extensive bush-fire—Victims to the flames—A charred waste—A misnomer—Ichneumon—In parlous state—Ground-hornbills—Signs of life—Out of their element—Giraffe—Lions at last—Shooting-bait—Vultures on the wing—Charlie, the old "moke"—"What's that?"—A snap-shot—Defiance—Bad shooting—My horse bolts—A charge—Collapse—"Pas op!"—A little spit-fire—In defence of her cub—A large lioness—Leona—To London—A sensational picture—Try for the other lioness—The lion's voice—Under other circumstances—A cautious approach—Gone away—Follow the spoor—A bit of excitement—A giant—A stiff run—An old veteran—Plans for a night-watch—Supper—Change of diet—A painful necessity—Feeling sleepy—Try the alternatives—Rhyming—Dreaming—Stern reality—"Little things please little minds"—Full bellies—Close quarters—Quarrelsome diners—To the health of *Felis Leo*—Too much start—Companions from the cradle.

I HAVE already had occasion to refer to the events which led me to trek down to the hunting-country in the season of 1891 as speedily as possible, and to the unlooked-for delays experienced upon the road. The proposal made to me by the old Boer hunter V——, that we should join forces and trek into Gazaland for elephants, had only met with my partial approval; or rather I should say that I scarcely expected the suggestion would ever assume practical shape, as, knowing some of the many idiosyncrasies of Boer nature, it seemed to me unlikely that we should be able to agree upon the terms of partnership. But I certainly little thought that death would step in and overthrow our scarcely-formed plans. However, it was so, and the bronzed, hale old fellow who had been so strong and well when we parted

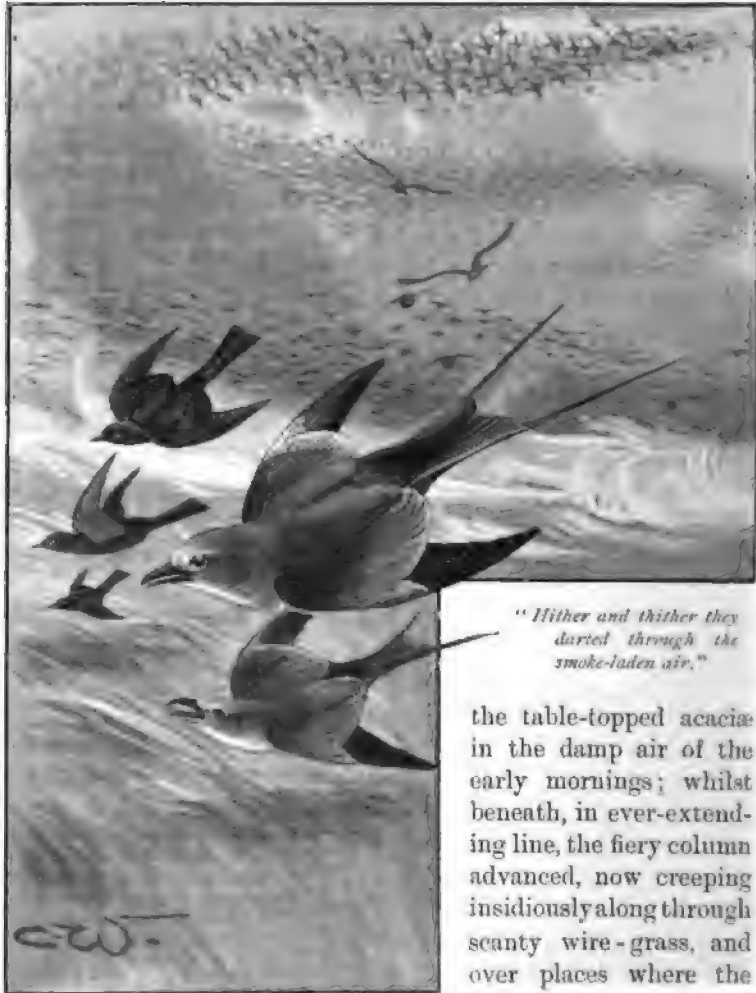
last, and had so forcibly urged upon me the desirability of my meeting him down on the Libombo, was in a few weeks' time, and ere we could meet again, sleeping his last long sleep on the reedy banks of the Timbabati river, another victim to malarial fever and dysentery. Hence I gave up the original idea entirely, and resolved to spend the brief remaining portion of the season in searching for lions and leopards in my old hunting-veldt. My whole *personnel* was nearly perfect—human, equine, and canine. I knew the country well, and, what was more to the point, knew from past experience almost the exact locality where lions would probably be found; therefore to all appearances my chances of success were exceptionally good.

Lions are undoubtedly great travellers, and the distances they will cover in a night would astonish any one unacquainted with their habits: a lion walking at his ordinary pace appears to be moving slowly, as indeed he actually is, so far as muscular action is concerned, but he nevertheless covers a great deal of ground on account of the enormous length of his stride. But I have found that where a certain locality is specially selected by them as supplying their requirements,—food, water, and cover,—there they will always be found in greater or less numbers, and though on occasions wandering to great distances, will return to such a spot within a day or two.

The previous season I had burnt off all the grass near this particular lion-preserve of mine at an early date, relying upon finding this year's growth far advanced—in fact dry and inflammable, so that I should always be able, by throwing in a few matches, to hustle a lion out of any patch of cover into which he might have crept away. Unfortunately this very well-arranged plan of mine proved, as is too often the case, a source of disappointment, for while I was still at my headquarter camp, fixing things up for my absence, and shooting game for the boys and dogs that were to be left behind, another hunting-party passed along on my spoor of the previous year, and hearing of rhinoceros in the bush close to my old *staan-plek* (camp), "Rhino Camp," hunted the country up and down for them, and eventually fired the grass.

And, by gad, that *was* a fire! For four days the whole country—clothed in rank vegetation of eleven months' growth, all dry as

touchwood—was swept by the advancing conflagration. Day after day the dark smoke-clouds rolled along in stifling masses over the trembling tree-tops, or hung in dull heavy cumuli over



*"Hither and thither they
darted through the
smoke-laden air."*

the table-topped acacia in the damp air of the early mornings; whilst beneath, in ever-extending line, the fiery column advanced, now creeping insidiously along through scanty wire-grass, and over places where the troops of game had

trampled down or eaten off the herbage; anon sweeping onwards, ever eastward, flying before the high wind at noonday. In front of the fire, from all directions, came innumerable flocks

of insectivorous birds, principally rollers—the common and lilac-breasted variety—and another bird of resplendent plumage—the *isoma* of the natives—a variety of the Cape glossy starling (*Juida bicolor*). Hither and thither, from sunrise to sunset, they darted through the smoke-laden air, playing havoc amongst the myriad forms of insect-life which fled before the devouring element. All night through the lurid flames, which, having acquired irresistible strength, were now quickened by the falling dew, raced tumultuously along over the grassy slopes, roaring, crackling, and hissing; forcing their way even through the damp green reed-beds, and startling the echoes as the thick canes cracked with reports like rifle-shots. Here on the morrow will be found the charred bodies of many a snake, lizard, and shrivelled land-tortoise, many a luckless field-rat and ground-pig; while all day long the weaver-birds, the winged dwellers amongst the reeds—who had thought their swinging-cradle nests secure from all harm—will wheel and flutter around the smoking ash-heaps, uttering shrill, wild cries of distress for the fate of their callow broods.

Still onwards, scorching, withering, blasting, until at last from the cool shaded banks of the Nguanetsi to the sterile slopes of the Libombo mountains, naught is left but a black ash-strewn plain, dotted over with a few small patches of pale yellow ground, where the destroyer has passed over and singed the young spring grass,—strips of scorched bush, and great blackened tree-stumps, into whose very vitals the fire has eaten, and which for many days after will continue to give forth fire and smoke, until at last, completely gutted by the flames, they fall on the blackened earth with an echoing crash, amid showers of red glowing sparks.

What a dreary scene meets the eye as we ride next morning over the charred waste! The silence of the grave, black desolation everywhere! One might be excused for wondering how anything that had life could possibly have escaped; and yet there is evidence that some creatures have learned wisdom from past experience, for the ubiquitous “ground-squirrels”—as they are erroneously termed here—are very much in evidence, scampering backwards and forwards, their rapid course marked by puffs of ash-dust as they speed towards the nearest thorn-trees, and peep knowingly at us over, under, and between the black,

scorched branches. These quaint little fellows—the *injindane* of the natives—are a species of mongoose, or rather ichneumon, very closely allied to the pencilled ichneumon, if not actually identical with it. They live in holes amongst the roots of the trees, or even in the hollow trees themselves, and are much prized by the natives for the sake of their tails, which they work up into hair ornaments, the pencilled hairs of the tails lending themselves to very pretty effects. There are two varieties—one dark rufous in colour, the other yellowish brown.¹

And there is the ugly, fierce-looking black 'mamba, the justly-dreaded king amongst South African snakes, gliding back into a hole in that old tree, his forked tongue quivering menacingly, and his cold steely eyes looking down on us angrily from above. He has evidently fled to that spot for refuge from the fire, but we notice that the tree he has chosen is burning fiercely below, and it is only a matter of perhaps three or four days before it must fall, and if the 'mamba happens to be on the under side he will fare badly. His only chance is to drop to the ground; and but that he is too quick for me, I would have anticipated the fall of the tree by the more certain rifle-bullet.

Hark! what is that hollow drumming sound proceeding from that clump of thick bush lower down the ridge? "Oom, oom, oomoom, oom!" constantly reiterated without cessation; a weird sound truly. It can be heard every afternoon and early morning throughout the Low Country, but unless one is very circumspect he will rarely get a glimpse of the birds (*insingisi*) that produce it. They assemble in little flocks of eight or ten, and are wary beyond belief, winging their heavy flight away through the trees upon the most distant approach of danger. They are specially fond of new-burnt ground, where they devour the scorched

¹ I have since seen a black variety, but I think it must be of rare occurrence: one such specimen I saw near the junction of the Groot and Klein Letaba rivers; another south of the Sabi, on the watershed of the Matawamba and Matamiri rivers; and a third, if I am not mistaken, in British Central Africa, at a place called Sumbi, to the west of Tshikwawa, and between that station and Tette, on the Zambesi. I shot the one seen near the Matawamba with my '320 rook rifle, but regret that the specimen was so injured by the bullet that I could not piece the skin together, it being completely cut in half. The animal was 14 inches in total length, of which the tail occupied 7 inches. The colour was very deep brownish black, with black pencillings more distinct upon the dorsal line than elsewhere, and absent on the head and under parts.

insects and reptiles killed by the passing fire, their food being almost entirely of an animal nature. They are very generally called, but of course most erroneously, turkey-buzzards, for what possible reason it is indeed hard to determine. As a matter of fact, they are the African ground-hornbill. This bird is about the size of a turkey-hen. The bill of a large one I shot measures 9 inches in total length from the base, over the "horn," to the tip of the upper mandible, the horn itself being 3 inches. Both mandibles have serrated edges. The tongue is rudimentary and fleshy; the bare skin around the base of the bill and on the cheeks is red, with an orange shade; bill black. The head, neck, back, upper part of the wings, and upper tail coverts are deep blue black; throat, chest, under parts of wings and tail white. The tips of the primaries are white, as are some of the secondaries. This description I only give from memory, as I have no skin of the bird in my possession. They seldom perch on trees, although I believe they roost in the branches, but during the day are invariably found on the ground. Several years ago I had a young one in my possession. It was of a mottled grey colour all over. He would eat almost anything, and was most expert at catching pieces of meat that were thrown to it. In eating a small frog, it would seize it between the tips of its beak, throw it up in the air, and catch it smartly in its gullet in its descent, swallowing it whole.

Proceeding further, we see still other signs of life—creatures that have returned to survey the ruins of their old haunts. There, standing under a tree, rubbing his heavy annulated horns against a low sooty bough, is a fine old solitary sable antelope bull, his dark hide almost indistinguishable against the surrounding blackness. He wheels round and stands gazing at us, motionless as a statue, until we ride past, and then with arched neck starts off at a long swinging gallop. Later on we come across a scared-looking group of koodoo cows, accompanied by a young bull, which scatter on our approach, and run hither and thither in blank bewilderment. All seem wandering aimlessly about in search of their old haunts—the long dry grass in which they were wont to lie up during the noonday heat in the shade of the grouped thorn-trees, and the dark cool retreats by the river-banks under the spreading fronds of palmito and spear-

grass. A troop of great hairy, hoarse-voiced baboons—far larger in size than those of the hill-country—that have been grubbing about eagerly for the burnt insects and reptiles strewn in thousands over the ground, scuttle away in a cloud of black dust, with weird gibbering cries and deep resonant barks, at our approach.

There on the opposite side, too, of a small water-course stands a clump of wildebeeste eyeing us suspiciously, and stamping and pawing up the black ash. They look very goblin-like, these dark-maned creatures, and quite in keeping with the scene. Now they spin round, gallop up the bank a little, then cross on to our side, then off up-stream again, their great unwieldy heads bobbing up and down with monotonous regularity as they follow each other in Indian file; back over the spruit again, and round they come. Halt! Again they face us, swishing their long black tails and stamping impatiently. Then the leader snorts out his defiance, and, wheeling round with marvellous regularity, they gallop off and disappear amongst the brushwood in a cloud of dust.

Ere we return to camp again we see five lordly giraffe, evidently not impressed with the desirability of grass-burning, hurrying along to where they may find something better to eat than the crisp charred acacia-leaves of this district. They glide along like very ghosts, silently and with apparently as little effort—their towering forms, rich colours, their lifelike reality, presenting a striking contrast to the dead world around them. They too stand for a while and stare at us in wonder with their great lustrous eyes, as if to ask us whether we are to blame for introducing the devouring element into their long-frequented feeding-grounds. Then they move off without sound, without effort, without unseemly haste, the checkered lights and shades playing over their glossy hides till they vanish amongst the trees like

“Shadows strange, that seem to fly,
Ghost-like, from my earthly eye.”

And when they are gone we say to ourselves, “What splendid creatures!” and start to reflect upon the why and wherefore of the lives of such beautiful harmless animals, that seemed doomed to fall before the deadly rifle, or to stagger away wounded, to die by the fangs of beasts of prey. But, at any rate, we have no

designs upon the lives of these, so our admiration is all the keener.

It did not take me very long to find out that the destructive fire had utterly laid waste my promising shooting-grounds. With the exception of a few ostriches flying at speed over the black ground, and an occasional Burchell's zebra or small clump of impala, there was absolutely no game in the place to support lions; so, for the time being, I was compelled to relinquish my original intention of making a permanent camp close to where I encountered the lions the previous year. Some timely rain, however, did a world of good, and it was not long before the green grass commenced to spring and game returned.

One day two of my boys who had been out scouting told me they had heard lions out on the Timbabati watershed, the central point of my hunting-ground. So I packed up a light waggon, put in a span of donkeys (all the country was more or less infested with fly), and moved off towards Rhino Camp, which I reached on July 30th. On the 31st, August 1st and 2d, I had some good sport, and on the latter date shot a wonderfully fat giraffe cow—in fact, the fattest head of game I secured on the trip. On this day the waggon had trekked from Rhino Camp over the watershed to my old camp, on what I have named Lion River, a tributary of the Vimbangwenya. The following day was Sunday, but the meat of the giraffe had to be brought on—it was too good to lose. That night we heard lions roaring freely on the watershed some six miles distant, and on the Monday morning I took a long round in that direction, accompanied by two boys, to see if we could tumble across a kill. We saw nothing, however, so I set to work to try and kill something for bait. For a long time nothing presented itself as a leonine sacrifice, but when returning to camp I secured a solitary old wildebeeste bull, carrying fine horns of $26\frac{1}{2}$ inches from bend to bend inside. He died hard, as they usually do, and gave me a long chase. We covered him up carefully, and struck off for camp, about four miles distant. A little farther on I saw a good troop of about fifty wildebeeste, and after a tiring chase got up to them, was able to put in a fair shot, and hit a good bull hard. The scrub was thick, and somehow I lost sight of the wounded one; so, as they ran up the other slope I took a shot at another,

which ran about a hundred yards and dropped dead, shot through the heart. This was a nice fat cow ; so after taking away the tit-bits, we covered her up, and again we set off in the direction of camp, now close by. We had to leave the wounded one, as we found no blood-spoor, and concluded it had not come so far with the troop, but had turned out at once on receiving the bullet and while they were all partially hidden in the bush. My plan was to drag these two carcasses around next day, and return with them to a spot I would select in the morning.

Accordingly, on August 5, I proceeded with two boys to look out a likely spot on which to place the drag. Our course lay past the dead cow last shot, and though vultures were flying aimlessly about, hunting as usual, and there was nothing to make us think lions were anywhere near, we approached the carcass cautiously, to find it untouched. I may here remark that in so placing bait it is well always to open the belly of the dead animal: the lions will thereby get the scent far more readily, whereas, if there be no such guide, two or three days may elapse before they happen upon the bait.

We stopped a few minutes to strip the skin from the cow and hang it up, and whilst so engaged noticed for the first time a large number of vultures, which had apparently risen from a spot a little way up the ridge, perhaps 200 yards distant. They were about in the direction in which lay the old wildebeeste bull, but both the boys and myself considered that the place where he fell was much farther up the ridge. Anyway, their actions were so suggestive that we decided to turn and go up in that direction, thinking possibly the bull that I wounded with the troop might have fallen there and been discovered by the vultures. I was riding Charlie, an old salted "moke" which I had purchased from some Boers, a steady-going old stager—the same that threw me so neatly on a previous occasion when I encountered three lions close to the spot where my waggon now stood. He was usually a reliable horse for lion-shooting, his air of stolid indifference when in close proximity to the grim brutes being most amusing; but at the same time—though willing to do anything within reason that might be required of him under such circumstances—he had a will of his own, and would exercise it whenever a lion "demonstrated" too much.

As I approached the spot that appeared to be watched by the vultures—my boys following 40 or 50 yards behind—I saw before me a wide “pan,” one of those hollows or depressions in the ground in which rain collects during the summer-time, and where buffalo, rhinoceros, and wildebeeste like to wallow in the mud, to rid themselves of flies and parasitical insects. This “pan” was now full of long wiry grass which had been left untouched by the recent fire; a few low scattered thorn-trees grew about, while to the right a rough ridge of rocks cropped to the surface, within a few yards of the edge of the “pan.” Almost before my eyes had fully taken in the surroundings, I saw an object moving slowly along under the far bank, perhaps 150 yards distant. The sun had only just risen, and looking full into its low level rays, I could not make the thing out at all, and stopped an instant, as the boys ran up, to ask “What’s that?” Before they could answer, in fact before they saw it, I recognised *what* it was—a fine lioness. Digging the spurs in, I galloped forward—she stood for an instant looking at me—then, as I was partly across the “pan,” and within 60 yards of her, pulled in and dismounted. Before I could take aim, however, she sprang lightly up the bank, with a loud purr and a graceful sweep of her tail, and made off. I fired a snap-shot as she ran through the bushes, but missed. Springing into the saddle, I had just gathered the reins together and shoved another cartridge into my rifle (a single ‘450 Field-Henry), when, with two or three short grunts, another lioness rushed out from under a little patch of thorny scrub to my right front. She ran right in front of me, but stopped as I checked my nag, standing with her head held low, her tail twitching nervously, her lips drawn up into a snarl of savage defiance, exposing a grand array of teeth, and her forehead puckered up into numerous lines and wrinkles. She was not more than thirty paces distant, and as she seemed upon the very point of charging, I fired from the saddle at once. It was a clean miss; but I think I may offer as a partial excuse for such shooting the fact that, in the first place, my rifle was a new one—I had not fired half-a-dozen shots out of it—and I had not yet “got into the way of it,” and that the sun was glaring full into my face, a position in which an ivory foresight is not good, as it is apt to glimmer in the V of back-sight.

The lioness had not moved; so, determined to "do or die," I jumped to the ground just as she commenced walking towards me at a slow pace, keeping her head down, and growling hoarsely all the while. As I raised the rifle my brute of a horse tried to bolt, and I had to check him with a quick pull at the reins. The lioness advanced directly behind a low black stump, and stopped as she reached it. For the life of me I could not get to see her head or chest; so, aiming at her shoulder-point slightly on one side of the stump, I pulled the trigger. At the shot,



"She fell of a heap in her tracks."

and the noise made by the lion, my horse dragged away, and with flying reins and ringing irons galloped off. The lioness answered the shot with a loud roar, making a sudden spring round and biting at her side, and next instant with open mouth she came straight at me. I jammed in another cartridge—there was no time either to close or raise the rifle—so, firing from the hip, I pulled it off in her face. Never was such a collapse: she just fell of a heap in her tracks, the bullet having entered her right eye and smashed into her brain. So close was she that one of

the wads had gone into her eye, which was slightly singed by the powder.

My boys, who all the time had stood pluckily behind me, caught my horse and brought it up—he had not gone far before he stood and looked back to see how matters went behind him—and I at once galloped off after the first lioness. Unluckily I failed to come up with her; she had too much start, and the bush was low and thick, and the ground too hard to take the spoor in a hurry. I had hoped she would have remained close by, waiting for the other lioness, but she probably cleared off on hearing my three shots. So I returned to the boys, entering the “pan” near to the spot where the first lioness had gone out. As they walked forward to take my horse, and when within a few yards of me, Stuurman shouted “Pas op!” (“Look out!”), and struck an attitude, aiming with his gun at something in the grass. I nipped off my horse and stood at the ready, and next moment saw the dumpy round head of a lion cub as it came bounding towards me through the grass. I think Stuurman was petrified by the violence of my language as I yelled to him not to shoot, but to try and catch it. Laying my rifle down I ran forward, the boys closed up, and we fairly had the little spitfire in between us. But where? Ah! that was the question. Somewhere between us, we believed: not out of the “pan,” that was certain, but a long way from a prisoner yet. A full-grown lion is able to conceal himself in a small space, about as well as any other animal, not to say far better; what, then, about a cub? However, we were rewarded, for after a quarter of an hour’s careful search, in some trepidation lest we should come upon it and find it larger than we expected, we discovered the little brute lying under a low bush, and looking exactly what she was, an out-and-out little demon, glaring at us out of her two great yellow eyes, and snarling and spitting so fiercely when we approached her, it seemed as if we should have our work cut out for us to capture her.

“Now, Stuurman, let’s drop on it both together!” And we did so. Shades of Nimrod! what a little fiend incarnate! What a worthy offspring of the brave and devoted mother who had given her life recklessly, knowingly, unhesitatingly in its defence! Now she lies with cold, stiffening limbs but a few yards off, and her cub cries in vain. With two pairs of not weak hands we

gripped the little chap, and yet it succeeded at the very first in nailing Stuurman's wrist between its already formidable little teeth, and wriggling one fore-paw free, signed its name on my arm from elbow to wrist in red characters. At last I had to give over my share to the second boy, May, and myself set to work to lash the little demon securely with my bridle-reins and some *voorslag*, letting her roll about afterwards at her own sweet will in the grass. And what language she used! We then dragged the dead lioness into the shade, and put the cub to her, and then *both* lay quiet, while May went back to camp to bring the waggon.

On examining the lioness we found that the first bullet that hit her had grazed her cheek, and, scoring along the shoulder, had entered the ribs, and lodged in the fleshy part of the thigh. This, of course, only served to exasperate her, and but for the lucky shot when charging, I should in all probability not be writing this now. She was a fine large lioness, pale silvery yellow in colour, in splendid condition, and in the prime of life, her teeth being long and perfect. Her length over all 8 feet 6½ inches, the flat skin just under 8 feet 11 inches; shoulder height, 3 feet 2 inches; girth of forearm, 15 inches.

Near the far end of the "pan" we found the remains of a wildebeeste bull which the lions had been eating, and which was undoubtedly the wounded one that had got away the previous afternoon, and which the lions had either found dead, or killed when wounded. They had first found it close to where I galloped in after the lioness, as there we discovered the buried entrails; they had then dragged it about 60 yards to the spot where it lay, close to the stony ridge above mentioned. When the little waggon came up, we put both dead and living into it and sent it back to camp, whilst we remained with some of the donkeys and dragged the other wildebeeste bull and the cow to the one spot, placing all in a reeking heap, and covering it over from the vultures, intending to return at dawn next morning and try for a shot at the other lioness, which I confidently expected to return.

The cub was a well-developed fat little thing, probably about four months old — judging by the time she afterwards shed her milk-teeth. She also had helped the others in disposing of the wildebeeste flesh, as her stomach was enormously dis-

tended. For a long time, of course, we could do nothing towards taming her—the thousand strange noises, sights, and smells about the camp precluded all possibility of such a result—but she lapped cow's milk and ate meat with great gusto from the first. I had a wattle cage built for her on a Scotch cart, and in this brought her out of the hunting-veldt. At first she certainly disliked me above every one, and used to get wildly excited if she saw me handling a lion's skin; but before I trekked out of the hunting-country I could clean her cage, and she would take meat from my hand. Before long she became very tame, and when at home used very frequently to sleep out at night, always returning again for her food. I gave her nothing but raw meat, and I should be afraid to say how many head of game I killed for her during the two years I kept her. However, latterly Leona, as I called her, grew too big and rough for me to manage—indeed she used to kill fowls and goats, to say nothing of mauling horses; so eventually, by waggon, punt, train, and steamer, she found her way to England in 1893, and I had the pleasure of presenting her to the Zoological Society of London.

In reviewing the day's proceedings, I came to the conclusion that it was a lucky thing I had my new rifle, which had been brought on to my camp immediately upon its arrival from England; for I should have been in an awkward fix had I been armed with the Metford, which, owing to the striker being worn, had so constantly missed fire. Cigar's ox-whip, as described some time ago in a sensational picture in one of the weekly illustrated papers, would have been almost as useful a weapon as such a rifle; only, fortunately for themselves, lionesses are not, as a rule, such sleepy creatures as to be caught lying on the broad of their backs when one of their cubs is already awake to a sense of danger—the position in which they were depicted in the sketch.

I made a great mistake that night in not watching by the bait, but I did not feel quite certain that the other lioness would return, and had no fancy for a night-watch over the revels of hyænas and jackals; besides, I was anxious to attend to the cub, and not leave it to the tender mercies of my boys, who would have but little feelings of pity for an *isilwana*. It was a mistake; for it was not yet fairly dark when we heard lions grunting out on the ridge in the direction of the bait. Had it not been quite

so far, I would have crept out with a blue-light: as it was, I deemed it best to wait till morning. I awoke about 3 A.M., and soon had my little kettle boiling and a cup of steaming coffee before me, while the boy who was to accompany me revelled in a tin beakerful of the same welcome beverage.

In half an hour's time we started, on foot, the boy armed with a heavy double 10 smooth-bore, one barrel loaded with loopers, the other with bullet, whilst I carried my new single .450. By reason of the wind we had to make a wide circuit, and approached the spot from the direction in which the lioness had cleared off the previous day. Needless to say, I had carefully examined all the approaches, so as to be prepared for all emergencies. When we reached the ridge of rocks before mentioned, I took my boots off to enable me to walk quietly, and then we crept very cautiously along under cover of the ridge until we reached a large *'mganu*-tree, about 100 yards in front of which was the spot I had marked as being within easy range of anything feeding at or near the bait. But we had to proceed very gingerly, as lions are in the habit, after feeding, of lying down in patches of grass, or under bushes or large rocks, some distance away from their kill, where they remain until early dawn, and then probably get up, walk about the spot a little, and finally clear out. Now, if we chanced upon one under these circumstances, as we were crawling on hands and knees, we should certainly get a scare, to say the least of it; though not but what the lion would in all probability be similarly affected. In such cases the most startling part of the performance is the vocal solo of the lion; and perhaps, after all, the lion's voice is the worst thing about him, although the least to be feared.

When roaring loudly in concert with others at a short distance off, the sound is, beyond all words, grand and awe-inspiring. In fact, I have never heard anything approaching to it; and it is no exaggeration to say that the ground actually trembles with the volume of sound. I say this unhesitatingly, for all that some would have us believe to the contrary, maintaining that there is nothing in it, and that it "cannot be distinguished from the booming of the cock ostrich." I admit that if the lion is at a great distance, and therefore heard indistinctly, his low grunting at intervals has certainly much resemblance to the sound

emitted by the ostrich in the pairing season. But that proves nothing; for how easily can the rumbling of wheels over a wooden bridge be mistaken for "heaven's artillery"! Yet one might as reasonably compare these two sounds as those of the ostrich and the lion. I speak with feeling upon this subject, for I do not like to think that, on the many occasions upon which I have lain awake at nights, listening with the keenest enjoyment and with quickening pulses to this grandest of desert music, my imagination was all the while running riot and picturing a mountain's child where but a *ridiculus mus* existed! It is difficult to describe the various sounds produced upon different occasions by a lion, as no words can possibly give even a faint idea of the depth and power of that mighty voice as he roars in uncontrolled freedom, nor of its harsh fierce savageness when he is angered or wounded. The sound most frequently heard is the low muffled grunting which he utters when prowling about, and frequently as a call to other lions—although the word "grunting" seems scarcely applicable, for there is nothing harsh about it as about the cry of the leopard: it is a deep, solemn "Goom! goom!" repeated at long intervals. It is only when full fed, or when he has secured a head of game, or meets a number of other lions at a drinking-place, that he roars freely. The opening notes start in a comparatively high key: "Aa—oom! aa—oom! aa—oom!" repeated three or four times, with a long distinct pause between each; then the voice is suddenly lowered—"Goom!—goom! goom! goom!" the notes following upon each other in increasingly rapid succession—deep and loud at first, and dying away in heavy and, if at close quarters, distinctly audible sighs.

But the lion makes other sounds of far different import, much harsher and more disconcerting than these, because usually heard at very close quarters. Disturbed at a meal when his appetite is not yet satisfied, he frequently accompanies a demonstration with undignified angry snarling; and there is his low skirring growl when crouching in thick cover, uncertain whether to fight or to fly, as, with flattened ears and nervously twitching tail-tip, he studies the situation, hoping by his hostile attitude to warn off the rash disturber of his solitude. Advancing warily to the attack, the growling becomes a deep, continuous rumble.

But worse than all these are the short, harsh, coughing grunts which usually accompany a charge with "intent." They are absolutely paralysing in their effect upon the nerves, if one is unfortunate enough to possess any, and, whether heard by night or by day, well calculated to test those of the coolest.

But to return to our subject. Our advance had necessarily to be cautious in the extreme, so as to avoid ringing our rifles against the rocks and kneeling on thorns. In the latter case Spartan resignation and strict silence were the only alternatives. But we gained the bush at last, and not a sound had reached us to lead us to suspect we were discovered; but, on the other hand, everything seemed unnaturally quiet in the neighbourhood of the bait—so much so, that we felt by no means certain that the lions were there at all. I say "lions," having omitted to state that upon the previous day, after the capture of the cub, we discovered the spoor of a third lion, apparently a half-grown animal, which somehow got away unnoticed during my scuffle with the lioness. We therefore anticipated finding this third lion, and the lioness which escaped, at the carcass.

It was still dark, though dawn was near at hand, and we could make out the carcasses very indistinctly. I was of half a mind to continue our advance, with a blue-light ready to light up at an instant's notice; but I almost at once gave up the idea, and decided to lie still, keeping a careful watch till dawn. About ten minutes afterwards we heard something at the bait; but, not to keep the reader on a similarly exalted pedestal of expectation to that which we occupied, I will say at once that at daylight we looked round and saw at the carcass three jackals—two big grey fellows and a little red chap,—while an old wiry-haired hyæna skulked off amongst the trees, looking thoroughly ashamed of his dirty night's work. Advancing cautiously to the edge of the "pan," we peered round on all sides. Nothing! The lions had been one too many for us; for though they had fed at the carcass, they must have left before we came, or else discovered our approach and silently made tracks.

I at once sent May back to camp to call some more boys and bring the dogs, and upon their arrival we took up the spoor. Both lions had been at the carcass and gone away together, and we held the spoor for two miles; but it eventually led us into

some rocky ground, over which a large troop of wildebeeste had passed quite recently, and all our efforts, assisted by good dogs, failed to unravel it. We had one little piece of excitement. As we were following the spoor through a shallow "pan" overgrown with long grass, I noticed at the far end of it a fallen thorn-tree, its boughs hanging over and interlaced with creepers, forming a perfect and delightfully cool arbour. While the boys were picking out the spoor and quietly encouraging the dogs, I advanced to this tree, which looked so tempting a spot for a lion to lie up under during the mid-day heat. I got to within a dozen yards of it, and could see inside, and there lay a brown object—evidently an animal of some sort—and, as I thought, very possibly a lion, although it made no sound. Silently beckoning to Muntumuni, my head-boy, to come with the other gun, I turned round as he advanced quickly, intending to point out the object and see if he also thought it a lion. As I turned, however, there was a sudden crashing of dead branches, and out rushed a large reedbuck ewe, passing between us with tremendous bounds, and leading my pack after her pell-mell. The apparition was so sudden that I was entirely taken by surprise, and had it been a lion he would certainly have got away without a shot being fired at him.

At last fairly beaten, we returned to the bait, and at once set to work to make a platform in a tree close by—in fact, just over the carcass, and about 15 feet from the ground. This done, and the bait properly covered up, we returned to camp. About 3 P.M. I sent boys off with my blankets and something to sustain the inner man during a night-watch, while I followed on horseback a little later. I had not ridden a great distance from camp when I met one of the boys hurrying back. He informed me he had left the others watching the movements of a particularly large giraffe upon which they had come unexpectedly. I accompanied him, and found the animal had fed on some distance; but we at last came up with the boys, who pointed out the animal about 400 yards distant. He was a solitary old black bull, the largest I think I have ever seen, before or since. We had noticed his spoor frequently along these ridges, and had put him down as a giant. I was badly mounted unfortunately, having left my best horse at the head camp for fear of "fly," and had only old Charlie to trust to. But I determined to try and bring the old

fellow to bag, so cantered on towards him. He saw me long before I got within fair range, and without stopping to ask any questions, made off at once.

Press him I could not—my horse had not got it in him; it was all I could do to keep him in sight. He took almost the exact line followed by the lions that morning, passing through the "pan," and within arm's-length of the broken thorn-tree from under which the reedbuck had jumped out. I had great difficulty in sticking to him through some thick low scrub on ahead; but my horse, though not fast, had any amount of staying power. The poor old fellow made a gallant show for his life; but a sportsman is remorseless sometimes, and as I knew I should very soon probably require more bait for the lions, I had no compunction about killing him. At last I began to creep up, and gave him three shots, shortly afterwards heading him and endeavouring to turn him back towards camp. But his race was run: turning down a long slope towards an open valley, he suddenly came to a stand and faced round, when I gave him a shot through the head, which brought him down. I covered him up—an awful piece of work this, for one man without a chopper—cut off the tail, which is the longest I have ever seen, and hurried back to where I had left the boys five miles away. I regret I had no tape-measure with me to have taken this giant's height: it must have been 19 feet, though by spanning it—twenty-five spans—it gave considerably more. The boys afterwards took four Kafir bullets—about 12-bore spherical, some were only stones lead-coated—out of him, one Martini-Henry bullet, and one 10-bore hardened spherical. This will prove how much they are fired at in a country where they are fairly plentiful. Only a few weeks before, as related elsewhere, I shot an old "stink-bull" with seven bullets in him; and, strangely enough, both these giraffes were blind on one side, and had old wounds from lions upon their quarters.

As the giraffe had held a most erratic course, I did not follow my spoor back, thinking I could strike a bee-line back, and nearly lost my way in so doing. In fact I was riding in the wrong direction, when some of the boys met and set me right. Arrived at the spot selected for my night's watch, I soon had everything ready, and three blue-lights securely tied in such

a position that on whichever side the lions might happen to be I could throw a light upon them.

My boys returned to camp at sundown, having received instructions to come up early next morning, and to let the waggon inspan and follow. As I felt somewhat hungry, I opened a tin of corned-beef, and, with a slice of bread, made a good meal, the whole washed down by a thimbleful of real Cape *dop*. In opening the beef-tin, the small circular piece of metal from the inside fell to the ground, and a few hours later formed the subject of much mental reflection on my part.

Expecting an early visit, I was careful to keep a bright lookout; but I fancy I must have killed the giraffe close to where they were lying up, and they had heard my shots and delayed moving.

Just before dark a large troop of Burchell's zebra and a few wildebeeste, followed by five fine giraffes, passed along just in front of me, the latter barely 150 yards distant. They did not hurry at all until they had passed, when they crossed my wind, and screwing up their tasselled tails, sailed away into the evening gloom. I thought it not unlikely that, as the zebra were heading straight in the direction from which I expected the lions, the latter might come across them, and take a fancy to a change of diet, if the "high" wildebeeste had commenced to pall upon their taste.

It soon became dark, for there was not a vestige of a moon—one of those nights upon which watching becomes, as it were, a painful necessity, instead of a source of keen enjoyment and pleasure, as it is when there is a moon overhead. And to make matters worse, I was forced to adopt that most comfortable, but to me unsatisfactory, plan of watching from a platform up in a tree. It just means that, as a rule, I go to sleep, as there is no call for the exercise of the extreme watchfulness which becomes a necessity when one is on the ground. In this case there was no help for it, as upon that side of the ridge from which I expected the lions there was absolutely no cover whatever which, by the addition of a few thorn-branches, could have been turned into a useful *scherm*; and by watching from the other side I should not be able to see the lions behind the ridge of stones.

The jackals, however, quickly became active and noisy, and the

screeching howl of some hyænas started the chorus of the night. But nothing came up close, though it is just possible the lions were about, but suspicious—as upon the previous night, long ere this, we had heard their deep voices somewhere close to this spot.

At last I felt that sleep was overcoming me; and who does not know that horrible feeling, that dragging down of the heavy eyelids, when you know it is your duty to keep awake, and yet, struggle how you may, you are consciously overpowered? Your whole being is under the soporific influence; you rub your eyes, smoke, try to make rhymes upon the situation, or review past events. All in vain! Eye-rubbing helps little—it is a mere matter of form; your pipe will not keep eternally alight without some slight exertion on your part; your rhymes and review of the past prove rather sleep-producing than otherwise, and at last, fairly beaten, you nod and dream. At least I did, after going through each part of the performance religiously.

The hyænas slunk away, the tittering jackals urged one to sleep by the very monotony of their cries, and the lions came not. I tried my pipe; aligned my rifle on the carcasses, which I could dimly see under the edge of the platform; rehearsed the performance of lighting up my blue-lights; then—hullo, pipe's out! Try again, and take a toothful of *dop*. Pity the night's so cold, it makes one huddle up into such a comfortable position for a "snooze"! Whiff, whiff!—never mind, the position is at least unique; I'll try a verse of—very well, say "rhyme,"—it should "go" well:—

Grim and gaunt the tawny hunter

(that's the lion, you know!)

Forth from out his reedy lair,—

Oh, *hang* this pipe! out again,—stick it away! Now start afresh—

Grim and gaunt the tawny hunter

Forth from out his reedy lair,

Recking not of hidden foeman,

Good, so far!

Stalks—

Confound it! Lair, air, fair, dare—shades of the poets! what nonsense next? What sleepy work this is! By the way, that lioness—was she asleep when I shot her, or was I? And I recol-

lect something about some other lions also; they were coming along in single file towards the bait: what about *them*! I know I was jolly near asleep when they came! Hark! I can hear them now,—can

“hear their feet,
Their stealthy, rustling step repeat.”

They are so close, their deep heavy breathing startles me, and—I awake; awake to the fact that I have been fast asleep, and that meanwhile the lions actually have come, and are even now at the carcass, within a few feet of me, and their eyes—as they look upwards occasionally—are like live coals, that I might almost touch by reaching out with my rifle!

Fortunate that I neither snore nor talk in my sleep, and that, inured to the exigencies of a hunter's life, I wake quietly and thoroughly, without passing through the transition stage of half-awake. The first distinct sound I heard was a very loud sniffing noise, which lions always make when smelling round about a carcass. A few minutes afterwards I heard the great teeth crunch into flesh, then a rustling dragging sound, followed by a deep guttural sigh of satisfaction as a lioness lay down, right in front of me, with a leg of wildebeeste, which she commenced rasping with her tongue preparatory to devouring. The other lion did not appear to be so hungry, for after dragging the meat about a bit, and walking round it two or three times, he stopped at the foot of my tree and proceeded apparently to investigate the origin of the strange scent that still hung around, but which it did not appear able to trace to the dark platform just over its head. Then I caught a tinkling sound which puzzled me not a little at first. No one was likely to have “belled the cat” in this case; it was evidently some piece of metal clinking on the stones below, and it was some time before I realised that it was *Felis leo* playing with that little piece of tin! “Little things please little minds,” they say, but whether that is equally true in its application to minds leonine as to minds human is perhaps a moot-point. Certainly “it is but a step from the sublime to the ridiculous,” and if there is anything sublime about his leonine majesty, there is certainly very much ridiculous in the fact that he should be so simply amused. All the while the lioness was putting away vast quantities of meat,

and after eating for about an hour, lay down to rest. She returned to the bait three different times, and took away joints, always dragging them to the same spot she first selected. The other lion also ate some of the meat, but was far more restless, constantly moving about from one side to the other, apparently never satisfied with its place at table. At last, about 2 A.M., I noticed the jaws did not work so vigorously, there were long and frequent pauses between the onslaughts upon the joints, and a constant rising up and lying down to an accompaniment of anything but polite gruntings that told of full bellies.

Now and then they looked towards me, for they appeared to notice the platform, which indeed frequently creaked, and called forth a low growl from one or other of the diners. I could at times make out their ghostly shadowy forms, and often could see the glaring eyes, like fireballs scintillating with baleful lustre. But it was time for me to act; no use waiting any longer for them to lie down close together, for they were not so minded. If there is any chance of a shot it is never advisable to wait too long, as they may not stop till dawn, but clear off at any moment. I could not locate the one lion at all; he lay somewhere behind me, in a direction that would have necessitated too much movement on my part to obtain a shot. So I decided to take the one in front, and cautiously pulling the blanket down from my shoulders, I reached the blue-light, and tearing the tape away from the front, drew the striker over the friction-plate, and—night became as day! I heard the lion behind me scramble off a few paces, grunting savagely: the other merely sprang to her feet with a low growl, and stood gazing in my direction; she was not a dozen yards away. Next instant the report of my rifle rang out on the silence of the night, the lioness staggered for a second, then sprang forward and reared up against the tree in which I was perched, tearing great strips of bark off with her claws. Kneeling up, I leaned over one side of the platform, between a fork of the tree, and fired down into her chest. I could not see my sights, as the blue-light was then behind me, and there was no time to light another, but the great head and massive fore-arms were so close that it was impossible to miss her. She fell over backwards, stood up once again, and almost as the last burning drops fell from the blue-

light, rolled over, dead, about 6 feet from the foot of the tree. I lit up another flare at once, and peered round in the direction



"The lioness . . . sprang forward, and reared up against the tree."

in which the other lion had gone off, but could not see him anywhere.

I have never yet succeeded in getting two lions with the

lights, and fancy it would be very difficult, unless with a double rifle, and when the lions were close together. This, however, is seldom the case; each prefers to select a spot for itself when dining, and as they are apt to be quarrelsome, it is perhaps just as well they do.

I waited for about half an hour, and then, as the other lion did not return, climbed down just before dawn and lit a good fire, for it was intensely cold; then sitting by it, upon the carcass of the slain, I ate the remains of my supper, and drank to the health of *Felis leo*; and afterwards, lighting up the old pipe that had proved so refractory a few hours before, felt at peace with all men.

As soon as ever it became light enough, and without waiting for the boys, I took up the spoor of the other lion, but failed to come up with it. When once a lion gets a start on such a comparatively high range of ridges, covered with open forest, it is very difficult to come up with him again, as he will go so far for cover and water; whereas if the kill be near both, he may be reasonably expected, when filled to repletion, to lie up quickly.

Returning to the scene of my night's watch, I found my boys had arrived and were examining the dead lioness with much satisfaction: they had heard my shots in the night, and were early astir.

My first bullet, I found, had entered the back behind the shoulder-blades, and to one side of the vertebræ, and passed downwards and out below; the second, entering fair in the centre of the chest, had raked her from end to end, passing through her lungs.

It was late when we returned to camp, as, after photographing and skinning the lioness, we had to go on to the giraffe and cut it up, which was heavy work, even with a good gang of boys.

This lioness and the one I previously shot were the exact counterparts of each other: with the exception of an inch less in the over-all length of this one (8 feet $5\frac{1}{2}$ inches), they measured in all respects alike. Both were full-grown animals in their prime, and probably cubs of the same litter. This one, however, was dry, nor was she again in cub. We examined the spoor of the one that got away very carefully; it was that of a half- or three-parts-grown cub, doubtless of this mother.

CHAPTER XXII.

LION-HUNTING (*continued*).

Unsavoury conveyances—An albino reedbuck—Lions on the Malau—Notice to quit—Muntumuni at fault—Lost out—Listening for signal-shots—*Verbum sap.*—Throughout the night—An amusing incident—Defiant—Return to the waggons—Hunting-dogs—Great destructiveness—Looking for bait—Signs of lions—Speed of sassaby calves—"Buka, baas!"—Cheetas again—Sable antelope at bay—A grand specimen—Lions' night—Cattle stampede—Dragging the bait—So near, and yet so far—The tale told—Change of plans—A night-watch—Outwitted again—Boers—"It was a lion you fired at!"—Unbelief—Wart-hog and sable—Just to satisfy him—By Jove, it is!—The lion's death—Resolution—Reward of perseverance—Traits of equine character—A sudden surprise—Dragged by the foot—A snap-shot—Seen in time—Stopping her gallop—A sickener—Follow the lion up—A charge in cover—Beaten—Ostrich-egg omelette—Return to the spoor—Vanished—The mystery remains unsolved—A fat lioness—Well worth the trouble—Unwilling to move—A successful ruse.

AFTER having decided to trek out of the Low Country at the close of the season of 1891, being thoroughly satisfied with a most successful trip—during which, besides lions and leopards, I had secured some valuable horn trophies—we loaded up the waggons and made everything ready for the homeward journey. Hunting-waggons, when thus loaded, are usually the reverse of savoury conveyances, because, when trophies are preserved, no matter how careful one may be, the heat and the close confinement are sure to find out the weak spots and produce odours the reverse of pleasant. But even then they are a shade better, or less bad rather, than those arising from some of the tan-yards in the old country!

At length we turned our faces westward towards the Nguanetsi, at which river we found Messrs Barber and Bowker camped; and they showed me a very remarkable specimen of an albino reedbuck, a young ram, which one of their party had shot higher up the river. I believe they afterwards presented it to the Grahamstown Museum.

Thence we trekked across to the Swinya drift, from which spot we had the choice of three return routes. I had almost made up my mind to take the one along the course of the Manzimtonti river, but thought it would be better to sleep upon it and decide in the morning. At dark, just after we had outspanned, a messenger came to me from Messrs Barber's camp who would have to return in the morning with letters from me. In the course of conversation round the camp-fire, I gleaned from this boy, who lived in the neighbourhood, that there was still a family of lions "boering" somewhere along the banks of the Malau, an important tributary of the Manzimtonti, to which I have previously referred. My informant stated that he had quite lately heard lions roaring there, when, in the capacity of guide, he had accompanied a party by that route out from the hunting-veldt. Of course this news decided me to adopt the route I had first intended, and, a small present having persuaded the boy to open his mouth wider, I soon knew all that he had to tell, and would have been pleased to secure his services as guide to the spot, had he not then been in my friends' employ.

It is very seldom one passes through that district without at any rate hearing lions, and up to that time I had already bagged four in the neighbourhood. It was a well-known fact that the kraal of natives under the headman, Diamond, who used to live near by on the banks of the Manzimtonti, had been actually forced to quit on account of the lions' ravages amongst their flocks and herds. So the die was cast in favour of the middle route, and it was with a light heart and renewed hope that I gave the order next morning to inspan.

Two days afterwards, when passing through some densely wooded country, Muntumuni, my after-rider (Muntumuni, the unerring!), and I were shooting away from the waggons and lost our way. The consequence was we spent two very cold and un-

pleasant nights in the veldt. What a splendid laughing matter it is afterwards, getting lost in the bush; but at the time how disconcerting, how annoying, how humiliating! How loth one is—even as the evening draws on, and the sun sinks lower and lower, and you still wander aimlessly on—to admit candidly, “I don’t know where the camp is!” The probability will be that, from the time you first begin to think you are lost, you will be steadily and surely increasing the distance between yourself and the camp, and gradually getting out of earshot of signal-guns, and out of sight of signal-fires.

“Hope springs eternal” in the breast of the lost one, and though constantly proving himself mistaken, he is as constantly certain that he recognises places and landmarks past which he rode in the morning, but which are just as much like those for which he mistakes them as lost is like found. If one will but be wise in time, he will confess to himself or his mate as soon as possible that he is at fault, and forthwith proceed to select a camp. Usually, however, he acts unwisely, though knowing better, and it is already dark when he begins to tumble about amongst the rocks and boulders of some dry creek looking for water, and to scratch his face and arms amongst the thorn bushes while selecting a spot for a *scherm*. But when a suitable place is found all goes well for a time—that is to say, if he has matches; if not, heaven help him! But if a smoker, he will assuredly have some. Then he ties his horse up, starts a fire, drags branches down wherewith to make his little *scherm*, and in one way and another his thoughts are for the time drawn away from the contemplation of his awkward position to the supplying of his more immediate necessities. With commendable zeal he drags in huge baulks of firewood from the outer darkness to within the magic circle of his camp-fire, and ever and anon he pauses in his labours to listen for a signal-shot from the waggons. The fact that these waggons are between fifteen and twenty miles distant of course makes no difference—under the circumstances! When he has wood enough he will out knife and seek grass—grass for himself, his *robe-de-nuit*, and for his horse. He is apt to wander rather far over this job, but how smartly he scuttles back to his fire if he hears some animal break away through the bush in front of him; and with what apprehension—only, of course, on account

of his horse!—he listens to the weird cry of the “tiger wolf” (hyæna), or the distant grunting of a lion!

And now the night begins in real earnest: he piles the wood on, lights his pipe, and—if he is fortunate—throws his piece of koodoo- or sable-meat on the ashes; and while this is toasting, gives his poor nag a rub down. He has no salt (as a rule, one will not get lost if he goes prepared for it—*verb. sap.*), but he is hungry, so what matter—ashes will do as a substitute for salt at a pinch. At last he lies down, probably tired out—if he has a companion in misfortune—with trying to prove, in a square-the-circle-sort-of manner, that “Of course, that’s where the waggons are!” Fortunately, however, he is of a different opinion next morning. So he lies down with his head on his saddle, the saddle-cloth over his back, and proceeds to toast his front. This is “done” by the time his second pipe is out, and he shifts over, intending to go to sleep in earnest as soon as his back is likewise “done”; and as a final precaution against the bitter cold which will creep in before morning, he dons his grass night-robe. “Final,” did I say? Not a bit of it! A hundred times through the night that grass will fall off, to say nothing of catching fire; then the saddle-cloth will go, and get underneath him; ticks, spiders, and other “bugs” will make a right-of-way over his person; and at last, in sheer desperation, he will get up and replenish the fire and his pipe, and start to study astronomy! Poor fellow! let us leave him there, watching

“Gigantic shapes and shadows gleam
Portentous through the night,”

and wish him a speedy return to his waggons!

Apropos of being lost out, I must relate an amusing incident that happened to a companion of mine while in his griffinage. He and I had separated after game, my horse being much faster than his; and after losing me, he struck off, as he thought, in the direction of camp. He reached a river,—the one upon which the camp was situated,—but as it was growing dark, decided to camp where he was. Ill-requited pity for his horse prompted him to give it a run before tying up, so he let him go, and placed his saddle, coat, and rifle under a tree. The horse did go, with a vengeance, along a bee-line for camp, whilst his late

rider, hoping to catch him, followed up closely, the horse being knee-haltered. Every now and then it would stop to nibble a blade of grass, looking behind in a most exasperating manner, as who would say, "Come along, old man, you're awfully slow!" A quarter of an hour later a mournful figure might have been seen wandering aimlessly around in the fast gathering gloom, and muttering awful curses on the hunting-veldt in general, and runaway horses in particular. For when he left his horse, he failed to find his way back to the tree where he had put his saddle, rifle, and coat, the latter containing his pipe, tobacco, and matches! He tried a perch in a tree, but it became so cold he had to get down, and backing himself against the trunk, shivering with cold, glared defiantly at the myriad savage forms with which his imagination filled the darkness of the night. He heard our signals from the waggons,—for we fired several shots, and two charges of dynamite,—but had no rifle wherewith to reply, and dared not leave his post for fear of never finding the spot again, and so losing all his things. However, we recovered him and them on the following day.

But for Muntumuni to get lost was quite an experience, though, beyond the delay it occasioned and the temporary discomfort, we were not any the worse for it. I had shot a magnificent old sable bull on the first day, whose head we religiously carried along as far as where we slept on the first night, and there we sacrificed it to our appetites. On the morning of the third day we had struck out for the banks of the Swinya river, intending to follow them down to the drift and take up the waggon-spoor thence. I shot a young Burchell's zebra, and cut some meat off in case we had another night out; but half an hour afterwards we reached a little granite kopje—invisible at a distance of 200 yards in the surrounding bush—which we both knew, and in less than four hours afterwards came up with the waggons.

On August 18 we crossed our old drift on the Manzimtonti and outspanned, and in the afternoon trekked on again along the course of the river by an old native footpath, and about 5 P.M. outspanned on the south bank near a large water-hole, and within a mile of the junction—upon the other side—of the Malau and the larger river. Just before outspanning, I walked a couple of hundred yards ahead of the waggons, without my rifle, to

select a good site for our camp, as it was probable we should be there for a week or more; and having chosen a place under an enormous *mtshisimpisi*-tree, was looking back towards the wag-gons, when a troop of fourteen or fifteen hunting-dogs burst out of the bush on the river-bank, and boldly trotted towards where I stood with a couple of boys. The only dog I chanced to have with me promptly went for them, but as promptly turned back again when he saw what a formidable and fearless crowd he had to deal with. Telling the boys to remain still, I ran back as hard as I could for my rifle, and when I returned, found that the troop had approached a little nearer, and were surveying us in a most impudent manner, one fine old dog facing us at not over 70 yards distant. I fired at him at once, but I was blown and unsteady, and so missed him. They all bounded off, uttering their strangely plaintive yet musical cry, and crossed the river. I followed them to the bank, and as they ran out on the other side fired again at them, and dropped a bitch with a broken back. I have no compunction whatever about shooting these animals wherever I see them, as they are little better than vermin, and fearfully destructive to all game, large and small, as well as to stock, and, owing to their numbers and style of attack, do more towards thinning out game than all the lions and leopards put together. At the same time, they are sporting animals, trusting to no ambush, but fairly running down their prey by sheer determination and persistence; and it is a fine sight to see them in full cry after a head of game—

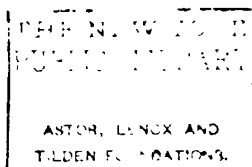
“With their long gallop that can tire
The hounds’ deep hate, the hunter’s fire.”

Nothing occurred to disturb the silence of our first night at this camp, and on the following morning I set out early with my after-rider, and two boys on foot, intending to hunt over towards the head-waters of the Malau and shoot something for bait. Shortly after leaving camp we cut the spoor of a large troop of sable antelope; so sending the boys who were on foot over to a high ridge above the Malau, and instructing them to wait and look out for us, I and my after-rider took up the spoor. As we did not care to lose time, however, by following it too closely, we gave it up in some long grass, where it was difficult to see from



PACK OF HUNTING-DOGS.

"With their long gallop that can tire
The hounds' deep hate, the hunter's fire."



the saddles; and shortly after we came on the remains of a Burchell's zebra lying under some dense, low, thorny scrub. Only the bones were left, but the strong scent, and the numerous "seats" around under the shadiest bushes, informed us who were the destroyers—some of the Malau lions for a certainty. The zebra had been killed about a week previously.

About a mile farther on we saw two sassaby cows and a young calf. I shot the one cow, and then gave chase to the calf; but try how we might, we could not come up with it, although we were both well mounted. They are marvels of speed these little sassaby, and open ground is required to catch them in; in close bush they simply laugh a horseman to scorn.

We carefully covered up the cow, though the high and comparatively open ridge on which she fell did not promise very well for lions, and then rode off to where we expected to meet the other boys. As we did not see them anywhere we struck off for the river, which, though broad, had very little water in it, though it is a raging flood in the wet season. Leading our horses, we clambered down a roughish place to a water-hole to get a drink. Muntumuni was in front, and as he reached the water's edge he stopped, and, pointing down to the sand, said, "Buka, baas!" ("Look, sir!") By all the saints in the calendar! there was the fresh spoor of a troop of lions which had been drinking quite late that morning at the hole, and gone out towards our camp! If only we had been coming down to the river whilst they were crossing, what a chance it would have been! The little particles of damp sand from their feet still clung together, not only near the pool, but some distance up the steep stony bank. A patch of grass had been burnt off on that side, over which we took the spoor very easily, and had gone about 200 yards up a gentle slope, when I happened to raise my eyes from the spoor, and saw two animals on the ridge which, in the hasty glimpse afforded me of their lithe forms, I took for lionesses. They were nearly 300 yards away, but we jumped on our nags and galloped towards them. They had dived into the bush at once, where I came suddenly on them, and saw that they were two cheetas: they were off again like lightning, purring loudly, and flourishing their long bushy tails. We failed to come up with them, though we rode hard; and this was in-

variably the result of all my attempts at riding into these swift creatures.

We now off-saddled for a while, during which time the boys who were on foot came up, having struck our spoor and followed it; so we all returned together to the river, to try the lions' spoor again. On the way back we sighted a grand old sable antelope bull, standing about 150 yards distant, on a low ridge, in the shade of a group of trees. I fired at him at once, but though I could see he was hard hit, he raced off over the ridge. I at once jumped on my horse and followed him closely, but before I got another chance at him, he suddenly and mysteriously disappeared on the edge of a deep bushy donga, into which I thought he had fallen; but Muntumuni and I at last found his spoor going through it, apparently heading towards a dense clump of thorny bush, in the middle of which a large ant-heap, covered with creepers and shrub, reared its head. I rode round this bush, and finding that his spoor did not go out on the other side, returned to where the boys were now waiting, and told them all to enter the bush from the far side and drive the sable out towards me. But as the boys approached the bush he charged out at them without hesitation, snorting viciously, and very nearly catching one of their number. He then walked slowly back to the cover, and stood under a thick overhanging tree. I had been unable to get a shot, as I could not see across the bush, and when I galloped round he had disappeared. However, I dismounted, and entered the bush on his spoor. The gallant old fellow snorted defiantly as I approached. I could only see his head and neck, so I floored him with a bullet in the head. He was a magnificent animal, one of the largest I have ever shot, with a splendid pair of heavy horns, 44 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches in length. He fell within 30 yards or so of the track along which the lions had passed; so, as it was getting on in the afternoon, we skinned him, and carried the head and hide back to camp, after dragging the carcass into the open, and covering it up for bait.

The grass on that side of the river opposite to our camp being very dry, we fired it at all points as we went along. It is never advisable to leave too much grass cover round a camp in lion country, and besides, the burnt ground is of great assistance in spooring. Torrents of rain fell during the night, accompanied by

thunder and most vivid lightning—just the sort of night, in fact, upon which lions are really dangerous. As I anticipated, they were all round the camp very soon after darkness set in, though we did not hear a sound from them; but the dogs were constantly on the move, barking angrily every few minutes, and but for them I feel sure the lions would have attacked. Several times throughout the night I got up and patrolled the camp, twice lighting blue-lights, but could neither see nor hear anything. The lions, bent on mischief, remained as silent as the grave.

Morning at last broke, wet and misty, and as I looked out of the waggon tent at dawn I saw at once that some sixty head of my breeding cattle—which I had brought down with me for the sake of the warm veldt—had stampeded. The trek oxen and donkeys, however, displaying more sense, had remained in the kraal. I sent boys away on their spoor at once, fully expecting that they would find the carcasses of four or five killed by the lions; but, singular to relate, I recovered every one, not a single head having been killed—a fact for which I am quite unable to account. In the meantime, after swallowing a cup of coffee, I took the field with four boys, on foot, and a driver and leader with eight oxen and yokes, to drag the carcass of the sable bull, shot the day before, to a spot somewhat nearer camp, in the event of my not finding lions at it already. Arrived near to the spot where we had covered up the bull, I advanced with May towards the donga, on the edge of which we had placed the carcass, almost certain of finding lions at it. But no, they had been too interested in watching my cattle; so having instructed the drivers how and where to drag the bait, the rest of us proceeded to where I had shot the sassaby cow, which was also untouched, and cut her up. I then sent the boys back to camp with the meat, and took a stroll round alone to try and find out something more about these most provoking lions. Walking along the banks of a small stream, I noticed a large number of very wet bedraggled-looking vultures in some high trees about 100 yards ahead of me. There was a great quantity of high cover about, and I thought that at last fortune was to favour me; so for two mortal hours I hunted in and round that bush, expecting every minute to hear the short, quick grunts, and see a lion making off. It is exciting work looking up these animals under such circumstances. Even

when one is only trying to beat out small game, there is a good deal of excitement about ranging thick cover, and it is certainly true that

“ the blood more stirs
To rouse a lion than to start a hare.”

But no such luck awaited me, though to this day I believe the lions were within 300 yards of me all the time. Quite dispirited, I gave it up; but just as I was about to cross the little spruit, I saw the fresh spoor of a single lion in the wet ground. I followed it up, and found that on the other bank it had been joined by a party of four other lions, and the whole troop had made a bee-line for our camp. Right over the burnt ground, fired by us the previous evening, I tracked them, till I came to some rocky ground near the river and within hail of the camp. Here I stopped, the spoor becoming very indistinct and difficult to follow, and called a boy to come over and help, and together we took the spoor out of the rocks and down into the river-bed. There, as if written in a book, we read the tale of the previous night's disturbances. Up and down the bed of the river this happy family had kept “sentry go,” tramping a hard path in the damp sand, till at last they had climbed out on the camp-side, and away went the terrified cattle. We lost the spoor on the other side, and could not determine which way the lions had gone off.

There was no time to lose. It seemed a moral certainty they would return that night to look up the cattle again, so I immediately sent another boy off to countermand original orders, and to have the sable's carcass brought to camp and placed in the river-bed. Fortunately he met the boys returning, and they went back to the carcass, which, to their great astonishment, they found eaten, though they had been scarcely two hours away from it. It had evidently been appropriated by a pack of wild-dogs. However, they brought the scraps on to camp, and, annoyed though I was, I could scarcely help laughing at the idea of attempting to lure the monarch of the waste by such an unkingly feast. It was quite dark when the boys returned, so I got outside of a glass of hot whisky, and at once took up a position on the high bank above the river, having placed the remains of the sable down below on the sand. I had a fine hiding-place inside a thick clump of palmito, with a good substantial tree-trunk to

lay my back against. The position was a strong one, and I felt capable of disputing the right of way with any or all of the lions of the Malau. The white sand of the river-bed formed a background against which a rabbit could not hope to move unseen, and there was but this one drift, as deep water-holes extended above and below this particular spot.

It rained at intervals during the night, damping both my ardour and rifle; but that would have been of small moment if but the guests had arrived to the feast. But they would none of it, and must have caught a head of game elsewhere, or they would never have given up my cattle so easily. Some unbidden guests came, though, in the small hours of the morning, in the shape of a pack of hunting-dogs, and after watching their frantic struggles for the scanty fare intended for their betters, and feeling much disposed to fire into them, only not inclined to waste a blue-light for the purpose, I got up and made for camp, and, after a cup of hot cocoa, was soon fast asleep. With morning light came the sad reflection that I had been properly outwitted by these all too cunning lions; and believe me, I felt none too good-tempered over it. Time was then with me a serious object, but I resolved to go out on foot and try to secure another head of game for bait, and have one more night of it. Breakfast over, I set out down the river, accompanied by May, one of the best boys of my crowd. I carried my old double 12-bore, firing a 2½-ounce bullet of soft lead, with which I had lately been experimenting. When about an hour from camp we heard three or four shots fired down the river by some one on horseback, evidently chasing game. Shortly afterwards I came across the party, consisting of three Boer hunters, who told me they had been firing at a troop of koodoo, but had not bagged anything. After leaving me they rode off across the river in the direction of the Malau. I remarked to May that it was very little use our going farther down the river, the Boers having come from that direction. However, we decided to go on for another three miles or so, thinking that, as we were on foot, we could better hunt out the dense jungle along the river-bank than they could have done on horseback.

The decision was a fortunate one for me. Less than a mile beyond, as we were picking our way through a very heavy piece

of bush, over ground strewn with granite boulders, May, who was behind me, suddenly pulled at my shirt, and pointing across the river into an equally thick bush, under which the grass was long, dry, and tangled, whispered, "Inyamatana—ipiva!" ("Game—a waterbuck!") Crouching down, I peered through the thick cover, and made out an object about 120 yards distant, standing apparently head on, listening. I fancied it looked something like a waterbuck cow, prompted to the thought by the boy's remark. However, under the circumstances, I could not spare the sex; so cocking both barrels, I crept quietly forward, hoping to lessen the distance by 20 or 30 yards, the boy following closely. I reached the edge of the bank, and through the overhanging bush got another glimpse of the game. For the life of me I could not make it out, what it was or which way it was standing; but raising my rifle, I got a sight, as I thought, of the brown body, and touched the trigger. Simultaneously with the report, which was answered by a strange hoarse sound, and a heavy rush through the bush, May exclaimed excitedly, "Ingonyama, baas! ingonyama!" ("A lion, sir! a lion!") Glancing back, I saw him standing glaring across the river and pointing with his assegai, and it was some seconds before he answered my query, "Where?" by saying, "It was a lion you fired at; I saw it move its head." So indistinctly had the animal appeared that, for all I knew, it *might* have been a lion; but it was with grave doubts upon the subject that, telling May to back up, I clambered down the steep bank, across the boulder-strewn bed, and up the other side. There we stood and listened—no sound!

It was a ticklish place to look up a lion in, and probably a wounded one (for I felt sure I had hit the animal, whatever it was), the cover being exceptionally dense and the grass long, but I was too keen to lose a chance after all the trouble and disappointment of the last few days. So we set to work, but not a drop of blood nor sign of lion spoor could we see anywhere, whereas fresh waterbuck spoor was visible at every step. I became more doubtful, May more positive than ever—in fact, he grew quite indignant when I persisted in my unbelief. He assured me he saw the lion plainly, but he did not like to speak just as I was pulling the trigger, for fear of putting me off my shot. He said it was standing head away from us, looking down the river,

but just as I fired it moved its head and glanced round our way. Anyway, we hunted high and low, but found nothing, so in a most unenviable frame of mind we turned out from the river and started off in a northerly direction. We had a run after a troop of koodoo, but could not come within shot. Eventually I knocked over a sow wart-hog, very fat, the meat of which we carried back towards camp. When within hail of the waggons I caught sight of a good sable antelope bull about 200 yards distant, standing on our side of the river and staring across at the waggons. As I threw my load of meat down and cocked the rifle, the sable saw us, spun round, and was off. But he had delayed too long. I missed him with the first, but the second barrel caught him in the ribs from behind. He staggered, stood a moment, and again rushed off, with my dogs, which had run out from camp, in full cry after him. They soon had him at bay, and another bullet did for him. We took such meat as we required for camp, and dragged the remainder into the river-bed.

Another futile night's watch, and in the morning we packed up. May's one theme of conversation was the lion, which he still persisted was hit, and could be found if we took the dogs; so leaving some boys to pack up, I went with him and a few others, as much to satisfy myself as to humour him. An hour and a half's sharp walk brought us to the spot, and we crossed over and put the dogs on. A koodoo cow and calf, suddenly breaking cover, offered some little diversion; but as to a lion, the dogs were not "on." Dividing our party, I with one boy kept the bank on which the supposed lion had been seen, May and the others taking the opposite side; and in this order we proceeded down-stream. About 200 yards farther on, the boys on the other bank broke into wild shouts, and running forward, I was in time to see May rush down the bank into the river-bed, with cries of "Hlomula!" and stab with his assegai at some object lying on the sand. Surely not! Yes, by Jove, it is! A long yellow thing, enormously distended, lying on its side between two large rocks on the bare white sand, one massive fore-arm with the claws half-protruding and clutching a piece of sodden drift-wood, the half-open mouth and cold retracted lips filled with sand and frothy blood and myriads of loathsome buzzing flies. One of the Malau lions lay dead! A fine animal, in his prime,

about eight years old, with long white perfect teeth, and a fairish mane of a silvery-yellow colour intermixed with darker hairs. As the body was stiff and distended, I could not get his measurement accurately, but made his length 9 feet 1 inch over all, from nose to tail-tip, and the body would certainly have contracted a few inches. The flat skin measured just 9 feet 5 inches, and the girth of the fore-arm 18 inches.

The shot I fired had hit him in the throat, passing through from side to side. He must have rushed straight away on getting the bullet, and have either toppled over the bank in his death-agonies, or attempted to cross the river-bed—or perhaps to reach water—and fallen dead on the sand. We soon had the skin off, but unfortunately the hair had commenced to slip on the underside. The skins of all the carnivoræ should be removed as soon as possible after death, as their hair slips sooner than that of any other animals.

The boys made noise enough to rouse the dead when returning to the waggons with the spoils; but I did not feel at all in accord with them, as I could not get over the idea of having done this fine brute to death in rather a mean way. Stricken by the fatal bullet from an ambushed foe, his dauntless courage availed him nothing: he could but rush on till his strength failed him, then staggering blindly over the bank, fall upon the soft cool sand of the river-bed, where once he roamed free and feared, but which should never again echo to his deep voice. He falls with a gasping sigh, his lips drawn back as a thought of fierce revenge comes over him; but he is alone—alone with death—and even now his great white fangs are clotted with the blood that fast chokes him, pouring from the severed artery; and his burning thirst is terrible. Once more he turns his grand eyes to the banks above, but there is no pity in the rustling trees or the quivering palmite fronds. A mist comes over him, the mighty limbs tremble, and with a fierce gasp he lays his head on the sand, dyed purple with his life's blood, and breathes his last. Perforce he dies miserably who would have died bravely!

We trekked on at once as soon as we reached the waggons, as I could not spare the time to remain any longer looking for the other lions. The next time I was near the spot I was too ill with fever to trouble about lions, and have never been there

since, though I trust on some future occasion to renew my acquaintance with the lions of the Malau.

In the preceding chapter I mentioned an occasion upon which my "moke" Charlie and I had a serious difference of opinion when in the presence of some lions, and as I found the incident an exciting one, I shall here relate it.

I always think it requires a great amount of determination to rouse oneself up from a comfortable sleep under warm blankets, about three o'clock on a cold, dark, misty morning, to get into the saddle (you don't *jump* in on such occasions) and ride out alone into the damp cheerless bush. You cast an envious glance at the sleeping forms you leave behind, grouped around the camp-fires, and feel inclined to invent some pretext for calling them all up; still more enviously do you glance at the sleepy, cramped figure of the boy who has had to get up and cook your coffee and saddle your horse—as, having finished his work, and seen you get into the saddle, he gives himself a stretch and creeps in under the blankets again. There may be a dozen lions awaiting your coming at the spot towards which you are riding, but that fact doesn't warm the atmosphere, nor dry the dank clinging grass or the dew-soaked thorn-bushes. Not until you near the spot where the game is supposed to be, and the need of immediate action presents itself, do you throw off the idea of cheerlessness which surrounds you. Anyway, I always experience it under such circumstances, and the morning upon which the following encounter with lions occurred was no exception to the rule; in fact, perhaps the feeling was then intensified, for I left my mates back in camp sleeping the sleep of the just.

I had been most unlucky hitherto with lions during that season—1890—and though I had as usual taken a great deal of trouble to look for them, I had not dropped across a solitary individual, whilst my nights out were equally unsuccessful. At last, however, I got on the track of some, and after almost living in their vicinity for four or five days without once seeing them, eventually came to terms with them in this wise.

I had killed a wildebeeste bull for bait, which for three days had failed to attract them; but seeing some very fresh spoor on the banks of a stream—the Lion river, a tributary of the Vimbangwenya—where lions had been twice to drink, I had the

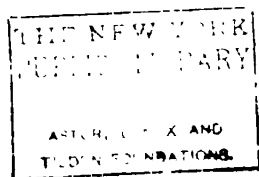
carcass dragged there, and hidden under a bush on the very bank of the stream, where it shelved off considerably to the water's edge. The river here made two or three very sharp bends in its course, and the banks were covered with reeds here and there; while on the other side lay an extensive grass jungle, a couple of miles in length. That side of the stream upon which I placed the bait was very open, all the grass being burnt off, and only a few tall '*mganu*- and thorn-trees scattered about at wide intervals.

The morning after I had replaced the bait broke cold and misty—a rare opportunity for catching lions at their feed—and I got away from the camp about 4 A.M. with a seven miles' ride before me. I rode Charlie, concerning whom I have already made some remarks, and will now only add that though no beauty—being ewe-necked, wall-eyed on one side and blind on the other—he is, or was (for he has gone to the happy hunting-grounds now, poor beast!) “real grit,” sound and strong, with plenty of staying power, and though not a flier, could do a spurt when he saw game in front of him, for he always entered eagerly into the spirit of the chase. He was steady as a rock; one might have fired a small cannon from his back, and he would not evince any more nervousness than would an inanimate gun-carriage. Not exactly afraid of lions, he yet held them in due respect, but would appear perfectly indifferent to their presence, always providing they kept silent, as he had a strong personal objection to facing them if they growled too much, taking it for granted that a creature that makes such sounds must himself be somewhat uncanny, and his quiet staid demeanour became upset thereby.

Owing, I suppose, to the thick mist which still hung around when I reached the vicinity of the carcass, I mistook the landmarks, and got too far down-stream. I knew the carcass lay at the third bend, but did not reckon upon reaching it so quickly. I was rather astonished, therefore, upon riding up to what I thought was the first bend, to see standing on the other side of the bush, and only a few yards off, a lion half crouching, as if wishing to hide, holding his head low, so that I could scarcely make out the face in the surrounding mane-hairs, and staring hard at us. I made a great mistake then in not firing from the saddle directly I pulled up, as I could scarcely have missed him



"I was rather astonished . . . to see a lion . . . staring hard at me."



from where I was. Instead of that I tried to dismount; but just as I was in the act of so doing the lion started growling, and a three-parts-grown cub sprang up from the grass and bolted to the river-bank. I scarcely know how it happened then: in two seconds my foot would have been clear of the stirrup; but the lion, "muttering low," proved too much for Charlie's nerves, who dashed off at right angles, as startled as if the ghosts of his ancestors had appeared to him, landing me on my back. My foot holding in the stirrup, I was dragged a dozen yards or so before the leather pulled out. Luckily I stuck to my rifle, and as I raised myself, saw the lion standing on the bank, broadside on, about 60 yards off, looking in my direction. Resting my elbow on one knee, I fired somewhat hastily, for the lion was in the very act of moving off as I felt the trigger; but he got the bullet somewhere, which he acknowledged with a deep growl, and appeared to tumble head-first over the bank. I scrambled to my feet, and, jamming in another cartridge, was running forward to get in a second shot, when glancing slightly to my left, I saw the head of a large liqness, surmounted with the wide round ears, rise as if from the earth. She had been lying just over the shelving bank, close to the carcass of the wildebeeste, and had no doubt been watching me the whole time from a distance of little over twenty paces. Immediately she found herself discovered she sprang up on to the bank, growling hoarsely, and stood for an instant glaring at me, and looking about as wicked as any creature can look; then with a quick backward glance over her shoulder in the direction taken by the other lions, she jerked her tail stiffly in the air, and with a savage grunt charged straight at me. My trusty Metford spoke up when she was within a few feet of the muzzle, and effectually stopped her gallop. She reared up, clawing wildly in the air, fell to the ground, and recovering herself, rushed round and round in a circle, with her head pivoted, as it were, on the ground. I had stepped back a few paces, and now gave her another shot, which thoroughly sickened her. She stood up, appearing not even to see me, and in a dazed manner walked down slowly over the bank, crossed the stream, and fell dead in the reeds on the other side.

Whilst my attention was thus taken up by the lioness—which

was doubtless the mother of the big cub which I had seen cross over—I had noticed the wounded lion enter a small patch of long grass and cover on the other side of the stream, after passing right through the thick jungle on the banks. I at once ran back and caught my horse, but though I did not spare the spurs, I could not get him to pass the spot again where he had received his scare, so I was obliged to ride 150 or 200 yards higher up, till I found another place to cross, and soon afterwards was on the spoor of the wounded beast. I saw no blood, though certainly I did not look very closely, knowing exactly the spot at which the lion had entered the grass patch. Upon reaching it, I rode twice round it, but without cutting spoor, or seeing or hearing anything in the cover.

I then rode in a little way on the spoor—Charlie behaving admirably—towards a thick patch in the middle, where grew a cluster of palmities, in which I felt pretty sure the lion lay hidden. But as we got farther in Charlie's coolness forsook him, and by the way in which he snorted and tried to back, it was evident he did not like it at all; and for the matter of that, I am not quite sure that I did either. When at last a low threatening growl issued from the very thickest and darkest part of the cover a little to my right, I felt that honour was satisfied, and dragging the horse round, I lost no time in getting out on to open ground. I had hardly reached the edge of the grass, however, when the lion charged out, grunting savagely, and I think if I had pulled in at once I might have got a shot; but I quite thought the lion was chasing me, and knowing I should want a start to get the old horse into anything like a gallop, I took care not to pull in too quickly. As a matter of fact, however, the lion only came to the edge of the grass, and then crept back again, so I repeated the manœuvre three times, trying to draw him out, but without success. On the other hand, I did not care about risking another charge by going in on foot, as in such cover one could do absolutely nothing, so after firing two or three shots in, of which the lion took not the slightest notice, I had to give him best, the grass at that early hour being altogether too wet to burn.

I rode over to the dead lioness, and threw my coat on her to scare off the vultures (which, I need hardly say, *will* eat a dead

lion, though it has been asserted to the contrary), then made the best of my way back to camp for assistance. I arrived there in time to find my companions about to discuss an ostrich-egg omelette, and after having a wash, it did not take me long to cut in. After a hasty breakfast, I called up a couple of boys and the two best dogs I had with me, Rover and Slim (Bushman, the brother of Slim, being laid up with a broken leg), and we set out together on foot, one of the boys carrying a couple of rockets. On arriving at the patch of cover where I last left the lion, we found by the spoor that he had gone out during my absence, and made off down-stream, being joined after a little while by the big cub I had seen in the morning. There was a little blood on the grass and leaves inside the cover where he had been lying, but not so much as I expected to have seen. The dogs soon took up the spoor, and ran fast upon it, so that we had some difficulty to keep up with them, especially as every now and then we stopped to light the grass. It was long, dry, and highly inflammable all along the bank, and we soon had a roaring wall of fire behind us; but nothing broke cover, though we found several lion "seats" here and there. At length the spoor—which hitherto had run parallel with, and about 80 yards distant from, the bank of the stream—turned down towards it, and there we became most unaccountably but helplessly at fault. Right to the water's edge we held it, the dogs going fast, and becoming momentarily more excited. The cub had evidently jumped over the narrow stream—its spoor being plainly visible on the fresh burn on the opposite side—and had made away across country, probably intending to strike the river again lower down, thus avoiding a considerable bend which it formed at this place. But the lion—had the earth opened and swallowed him, he could not have vanished more completely, and without leaving any spoor as a guide to the direction he had taken. The dogs also were completely at fault—they positively refused to be laid on to the cub's spoor, and kept rushing up and down the banks, and quartering the ground in all directions, seeking for the lost spoor. All that we could tell for certain was that the cub had led down to the water, where it had jumped over, while the lion, following in its footsteps, had slipped in getting down the low bank, and rolled over on to its wounded side in the reeds, which

were thickly smeared with blood; beyond that—*nû*! Naturally we supposed he had gone down the stream, walking in the water, which was very shallow, so we hunted both banks for a mile down, but saw never a sign; and the mystery has ever since remained unsolved.

I can only hazard a guess at what may have occurred—viz., that the lion having accompanied the cub as far as the edge of the water, and there fallen, found itself getting weaker and unequal to the task of crossing the stream and the wide stretch of open country on the other side. Naturally, in its wounded state it did not care to face the open, preferring—as is usual with lions under similar circumstances—to get away into thick cover. Therefore as soon as the cub crossed over, the lion might have turned back up the bank, walking slowly into the cover through a portion of which we had been following him hitherto. If he had done this, and moved slowly, as would probably be the case, it would account for our not being able to see the spoor, as the ground was hard and the grass long, and it was only where he had been going quickly, and thus left the marks of his extended claws, that we could see any spoor at all. But this explanation does not account for the dogs being unable to get the scent, and there is no question but that they were entirely thrown out immediately the spoor separated.

We followed on the cub's spoor a short distance, thinking possibly the lion might have rejoined him elsewhere, but at last gave it up, when it appeared the cub had held on alone, as I did not think the latter would have been worth shooting, even if we had come up with him; and besides, I was anxious to get the lioness skinned, as the sun was getting so hot there was great risk of the hair slipping. I can only hope that the lion eventually recovered; but I fear otherwise, as, owing to their carnivorous habits, the wounds of these animals, if at all serious, seldom heal.

The lioness proved to be a fine beast, in her prime, and inordinately fat—more so, I think, than any other I have killed. In total length she measured 8 feet 2 inches, of which the tail was 2 feet 7 inches; her shoulder height 3 feet. She had three fœtus cubs inside her, a male and two females. Upon examining her I found that my first bullet had entered at the point of the left

shoulder, which it completely smashed, passing through the lungs and carrying splinters of the bone with it, the butt being found under the skin on the small ribs upon the opposite side. The second bullet had hit her in the neck, near the junction of the head and the cervical vertebræ, but without in any way damaging the latter. No doubt it was the first shot that proved fatal.

Neither the lion nor the cub returned to eat at the carcass again, for I visited the spot at dawn on each of the two following days. It is not pleasant work getting up at dark and walking miles away from one's camp to visit a kill; but it is necessary, and after all, if success comes, it is well worth the inconvenience put up with to secure it.

Lions, by the way, are sometimes very difficult to dislodge from cover in which they have taken refuge. On one occasion I was walking along the banks of the Makambana, at a spot where the reeds were very dense, and a lion jumped out of these, and before I could get a shot entered a small patch of thorn-jungle near the bank. I had four or five boys with me, and we tried every means in our power to dislodge that brute, short of going in and driving him out, which would have been sheer madness to have attempted, as the bush was so thick and thorny. We burnt some grass on the edge, but it soon went out; then we threw stones in; and at last I fired three shots inside, but the lion never moved, nor even so much as growled. It was about 10.30 A.M.; so as the day was before us, and it seemed unlikely the lion would care to remain in such scanty cover any longer than he could help, I instructed the boys to walk away from the spot upstream, talking loudly all the time till they were quite out of sight of the bush, then to sit down and silently await events. In the meanwhile I posted myself behind a low thorn-bush, about 40 yards away from where I supposed the lion to be, and below wind of him. The ruse succeeded admirably, though it was between 3 and 4 P.M. before he moved out, and I was nearly roasted to death in the glaring sun. He came out of the bush almost at the spot at which he went in, and walked slowly in a direction that would take him past me at not over twenty paces. But before reaching me he stopped, staring hard in my direction through a little thorn-bush, which prevented my getting a shot. I thought he had made me out, but he walked forward again, then stood,

looking back over his shoulder in the direction the boys had gone. He fell to my shot, but recovered himself, and dashed off into the reeds, where I could hear him growling. I missed him with my second barrel. By the time the boys came up, however, the growling had ceased, and after waiting for ten minutes more we entered the reeds and found him lying stone-dead. My bullet (12 bore) had smashed him up fearfully, tearing through both lungs, portions of which were protruding from the hole at which the bullet passed out.

CHAPTER XXIII.

LION - HUNTING (*continued*).

An eventful night—Scarcity of lions—Trek into “fly”—News from camp—Visit from a lioness—A young lion saves his hide—The Simana Kopjes—“Pan”-water—Lions at hand—“Nans’ ihuhla!”—Moscow at his best—Traces of lions—Impala-bush—Wildebeeste bulls—Lions at the giraffe—Preparations—Double *versus* single barrels—An intruder—A magnificent lion—Troop of ten—A grand sight—Cubs take the lead—An alarm—Return to the carcass—Discovered—An anxious moment—The first shot—Stopped in time—A snap-shot—Means mischief—Alone—Dutch courage—Creep out to the lion—Dead—Sleep and dream—The lions return—A grave mistake—Missed!—Follow up the lioness—Fever—The lions seen again—My evening’s bag—Attacked by a leopard—Awkward predicaments—Treed by a dead lion—A tale of misfortune—Shifting camp—Trophies of the chase—On the trek—Impala—A grass fire—Giraffe—A big bull—Game-pits—Lost out—Follow the river—The last match—Tiffin, dinner, and supper—A warning of danger—Watched by a lioness—My horse attacked—Scared—Between the lions—Too risky—Wound the lion—The lioness leaves—Signal-shots—The lion gets away—Hard luck—Ehlanzeni’s death.—Conclusion.

JULY 6, 1892, is a day which will ever stand out prominently amongst those of my sporting career which are marked in red letters, as upon it I had the rare good luck to bag three lions out of a troop of ten, in something under twenty minutes. The events which led up to my ultimate success happened in this wise. My friend F—— and I were shooting during that season in partnership, and we had made our headquarters at my old “Wild-Cat Camp,” near to the junction of the Mabutsha and Manunga rivers, tributaries of the Ngunanetsi. Up to the day in question we had met with very fair sport, but with the exception

of one lion seen by F—— in the dense bush on the watershed between the Swinya and Nguanetsi, at which he failed to get a shot, no lions had been encountered, though we frequently heard them round the camp; and, as usual, I had been at a great deal of trouble to try and secure them, but without avail.

We eventually left our headquarter camp and trekked over into the "fly" with a light donkey-waggon, hoping to find some lions in my favourite spot about the Vimbangwenya. This attempt likewise proved futile, and after spending a few days there, we again trekked back. I should mention that we had not yet actually decided to leave this camp, but very promptly made up our minds to do so upon the arrival of a boy from one of the drivers who had been left in charge at Wild-Cat Camp during our absence, to say that the lions were troubling them, and coming very near the camp; and that on one occasion, whilst a couple of boys were hunting in a dense bush a few hundred yards from the waggons, they had come across a lion, which the dogs had bayed,—and though the boys themselves did not actually see it, they had heard it growling. So we inspanned and trekked away at once; but though we questioned the Kafirs pretty closely, we failed to get any satisfactory intelligence from them upon our arrival.

It was certain, however, that there were lions about, as a few nights later we had a visit from one, which came rather close to the waggons and grunted loudly for some time. It left, however, eventually, probably on the following day, as we found spoor of a lioness which had passed up the river towards Messrs Barber's camp on the Manunga. Two days afterwards they shot the old blind lioness, as I have elsewhere mentioned, which had received its injuries from the spines of a porcupine. I believe this lioness to have been the one that paid a visit to our camp, though it is difficult to be sure of it, as there were many more lions about than that one. On the day we first trekked to Wild-Cat Camp we saw any quantity of lion-spoor along the banks of the river, below and about the junction, and the same day I turned out a young lion or lioness from the reeds, where it had killed and partly eaten an impala ewe. It ran along near the bank through some very thick, low, thorny scrub—though the grass was burnt off—and eventually turned down towards the creek again. At

first, as it ran broadside, it seemed to me quite a small one, and hardly worth shooting at; but as it pulled up on the bank about 30 yards distant, and turned its head to look at me, I thought that after all it was at least three-parts grown, and I might as well give it a shot. Pulling in, I jumped down and was about to fire, when my horse dragged at the reins hanging over my arm, and pulling clear, bolted. It put me off my shot, and next moment the lion disappeared in the reeds; and though I tried hard to get him out of it, I failed to catch sight of him again. F—— met my horse making away to the old camp, and caught and brought it back to where he heard me afterwards shooting at a koodoo bull. So that, beyond question, there were lions in the vicinity, and they only wanted finding.

At last luck turned, as it always will sooner or later. On the night of the 4th we heard lions roaring out on the Simana watershed, about six miles distant, and close to the kopjes of that name at which I have frequently camped; so, early on the morning of July 5, I rode out in that direction, accompanied by May on Charlie, my friend having decided to hunt down the other way. We set out about W.N.W., edging off more in a westerly direction towards mid-day, and had seen several troops of wildebeeste and Burchell's zebra, a reedbuck ram, and a couple of giraffe about three-parts grown. I did not fire at any of these, my object being only to secure something for bait, at or near the Simana Kopjes, as it seemed probable the lions were lying up in some of the dense and extensive patches of cover on the Simana river. About mid-day we off-saddled close to a considerable "pan" in the kopjes, containing delightfully cool and—what was indeed a treat in that country, where all the water is brackish, not to say salt—fresh water.

There were a good many vultures and marabout storks on the wing that day, apparently turning their attention in a careless sort of manner to something in the neighbourhood of the kopjes; and though these birds will frequently accompany mounted men at greater or less distances when their instinct tells them that shooting is the order of the day, there was a something about their manner that led me to think it possible lions were not far off. All the time I sat there smoking I could not get rid of the idea—I seemed to *feel* their presence.

At last we saddled up again, hunted a little through the long line of low kopjes, and then struck off along the watershed, keeping close against the kopjes. In places as we rode along we lit the grass, and when near to the last kopje I was burning a thick patch out, when my matches fell to the ground. Jumping down to pick them up, I heard May suddenly say, "Bona, baas, nans' ihuhla!" ("See, sir, there's a giraffe!") I looked up quickly in the direction he pointed, as I regained the saddle, and saw it almost instantly—a splendid old bull, very light in colour; but it turned silently round and vanished almost in a moment amongst the dark grey thorn-trees. We cantered up, but for the life of me I could not catch sight of it again. However, we rode along the belt of trees, and soon saw an object standing on some rising ground, close to the last low kopje. We could not make out its nature for some time, though each believed it to be the giraffe, when suddenly it swung round and was off again. This was a fine chance. I was splendidly mounted on my grey, Moscow, and for a couple of hundred yards went two yards to the giraffe's one. But we then came on some rough stony ground, a perfectly horrible place, composed of great round stones and ledges of bed-rock, all as polished and slippery as wear and tear could make them, and it took me all my time to keep in the saddle and the horse on his legs. Here the giraffe rattled away merrily, flinging a shower of stones behind him as he clattered along. At last he emerged from the stones, and started over a wide, almost treeless, flat, the dry bed of some old "pan." When at last I got out of the bad place I just let Moscow go. Right well the gallant grey knew his work—he required no guiding; all I had to do was to keep down in the saddle and sit tight, and in a few minutes I was at the bull's heels; then riding up on the off-side, I dismounted and gave him a shot. A vicious kick out, and he turned short off into the thick bush skirting the flat, heading straight for camp. Up and away again, and another shot from behind brought the bull to, and a third dropped him, all of a heap, dead.

May, a perfect marvel on foot, is nowhere with a horse; but he turned up at last, having lost his hat, as I had mine, at the commencement of the run. Together we covered the bull up, then took the back-spoor to find our head-gear, after which we

rode off through some very thick patches of impala-bush towards camp. When in the middle of these, we came suddenly on to fresh traces of lions, and their spoor was everywhere about in the soft grass. I would not have taken anything then for my chance of bagging one that day, for they had but just left the spot apparently—perhaps only moved off when they heard my shots at the giraffe. Riding cautiously and quietly in and out amongst the low thick bush, we found the remains of a Burchell's zebra, which had but just been eaten. We at once dismounted, as the nature of the impala-bush is such that if we came on to the lions there would only be time for a quick shot, so it was far better to be on foot.

I do not know the botanical name of this bush, but it is called locally impala-bush, merely because it is found very plentifully in the Low Country, on the flats bordering the larger rivers; and impala are very partial to the secure retreats it affords, though not more so than are koodoo, wildebeeste, and other game. It is a low thick bush, with an average height of 8 feet, and lancet-shaped leaves of a bright glossy green; it grows in thick clumps, usually in sandy soil, and with narrow lanes or paths between the clumps, and is one of the few thornless bushes of the Low Country. The Kafirs call it *indhlela y'enyamatana* (game-path), doubtless in reference to the game usually found amongst it.

So we hitched our horses up to a bush, and proceeded in our endeavours to unravel the mazy footprints which appeared in every direction. We fully expected to come across the lions in some of those cool, shady nooks, and I quite believe that they were there all the time; but although we hunted thoroughly all round, we failed to see them, and neither could we ascertain in what direction they had gone off—if, indeed, they had done so, which I think improbable. In many places the bush was so dense as to be almost impenetrable: such we avoided, as it would have been madness to try and force a passage without dogs. So, we had to relinquish the search and return to our horses; but I felt that the death of the giraffe so close to the spot where the lions had lately been was at any rate a point gained.

On our return towards camp we again passed near to the dead giraffe, and about half a mile farther on sighted two fine wildebeeste bulls. I gave chase to them, and they turned and headed

back towards the giraffe. I shot the one within 50 and the other within 150 yards of the carcass. Then I felt satisfied, as it seemed certain that if the lions were anywhere near about, they would find one or other of the carcasses before long.

Next day F—— and I hunted down the river on foot, having sent May in charge of one of the waggons to load up the hides and some of the meat, leaving the rest for bait; but of course he was religiously instructed not to interfere with anything the lions might have touched, though I thought it unlikely they would have put in an appearance upon the first day.

On our return to camp, as the waggons came in, May walked up, swelling with importance and good news, his unhandsome face aglow with excitement, and his eyes preceding him by an inch or two, more or less. Lions had eaten the giraffe! That was an almost unnecessary piece of information after I had glanced at his face.

“Well, how many do you think?”

“I don’t know, sir—a troop.”

“But how many, *about*—four—five—six?”

“Many—a big troop; you will see for yourself; they have left but little meat.”

I knew it must be a fair troop that could nearly demolish a whole giraffe bull in one night; but, whatever their number, there was no time to be lost, as it was already getting on in the afternoon. So I immediately set about making preparations for a night-watch, as there was a good moon, and the lions were almost certain to return. About 3.30 P.M. I saddled-up Moscow and set out for the place where the giraffe had fallen, accompanied by my head-boys May and Stuurman, on foot, carrying my ulster, blanket, and a chopper. Directly we reached the spot we searched around for the spoor, and ascertained that the lions—whose number I put down at eight—had come all the way along on the spoor of the giraffe where I had raced it on the previous day, and in returning had taken the same track, heading away for the kopjes. This confirmed me in my opinion, previously formed, that these lions must have been in, or very near to, the thicket of impala-bush through which we had followed the giraffe, and where we had found their spoor near the remains of the Burchell’s zebra.

The selection of a spot from which to watch was a more difficult matter. The dead giraffe lay on the slope of a high and comparatively open ridge, covered with long yellow grass, with a few thorn-bushes about, and here and there some fair-sized *mapani*, *'mganu*, and other trees. About 20 yards distant from the carcass, and—according to its present direction—below wind of it, stood a little clump of low thorny bush, the only favourable bit of cover that presented itself; so I decided upon it at once, and we very soon had a low hedge of thorn-branches round the front of it, enclosing a snug little space in which I could sit comfortably.

I may here remark that when watching for a lion at night, or indeed at any time, near a carcass, any natural cover that may be in the vicinity should be utilised for making a *scherm*, in preference to building one where there was previously no cover at all. Lions are very quick at detecting any alteration of the kind that may have taken place, and at once become suspicious, which may lead to them either refusing to approach within range, or becoming dangerously inquisitive and paying the watcher a visit from some unexpected quarter, which he would prefer to dispense with. A carefully constructed *scherm* under or round a bush growing in the vicinity is not likely to attract attention.

As soon as we had finished the *scherm*, a log of wood—after being previously tapped with the axe to make sure that it contained no snakes, scorpions, or other undesirable companions—was thrown in for a seat, and my blanket folded on top of it; then everything being in order, I sent the boys back to camp with my horse, giving them instructions to come up at daylight next morning, bringing Rover and Bushman with them. It was now nearly 5 P.M., and as the evening was growing chilly, I put on my ulster and lit my pipe, for I anticipated nearly a five hours' watch before the lions put in an appearance.

I was armed with my old favourite Westley-Richards double 12, carrying 6 drams and $1\frac{3}{4}$ -ounce bullet. I think that, where possible, a double rifle should always be used for dangerous game, and especially for night-shooting. Certainly until quite lately I have always used a single (and there is no better or more effective rifle in the world than a Gibbs' Metford, '461 bore); but as I have more than once narrowly escaped serious accidents

when using a single rifle, I strongly advise the use of double weapons.

Ere my boys were quite out of sight down the ridge I saw a solitary old wildebeeste bull cantering slowly away from them towards me, and as I did not want him to be in the vicinity when the lions came along, in case he should impart his alarms and suspicions to them, I walked out towards him, rifle in hand. He let me approach to within 100 yards, then, after a hard stare, cleared off, and I hurried back to my *scherm*. Laying my rifle against the bush, I was in the act of pulling off my ulster—as I found it rather too warm—when suddenly from out of the long grass, in the direction from which the lions had previously come, rose a great head and shoulders covered with a long flowing mane, black as night. There before me, barely 50 yards distant, stood the finest lion, I think, that I have ever seen—at any rate the largest I have ever shot—while away to my left I saw a number of others advancing through the long grass, their great, lithe, sinewy forms showing out in strong relief in the warm glowing light of evening. The instant I caught sight of them I crouched down in the *scherm*, and taking up my rifle, cocked both barrels, keeping a close watch upon the old male, whilst eagerly scanning the surrounding ocean of long grass with a view to ascertaining how many more guests I might expect to the feast. I soon made out another fine black-maned lion bringing up the rear, though still far behind; the troop in all consisting of ten members—two large black-maned lions, a heavily-built yellow-maned lion with scanty mane, one dark-coloured lioness of massive build—a perfect beauty—three yellow lionesses, and three nearly full-grown cubs of perhaps three years of age, all lionesses, I think.

I felt that I was in rather an awkward position, and in great danger of being discovered before the other black-maned lion should approach near enough for a shot; and I was naturally anxious to secure the two best, if possible. The largest one, having advanced nearer the carcass, was certainly not over 30 yards distant, but unfortunately the other one was fully 200 yards away, and in fact I could only make him out very indistinctly as he stood half hidden in the long grass. Had I been armed with a long-range rifle I would have chanced it, but I knew that my double 12 was not sufficiently accurate for



"Their leader . . . with dark, tangled mane . . . sweeping the grass-tops."

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the occasion, and I could not afford to throw away shots. So I resolved to wait patiently, hoping for some change of position that should bring the second black-maned lion within easy range. And I can unhesitatingly say that never in the whole course of my life have I seen anything to equal the savage grandeur and beauty of the scene which, spellbound, I then looked upon. A feeling of admiration and of wondering awe quickly dissipated my first momentary nervous surprise, and as long as I live the memory of that scene will not leave me.

Awkward, did I say my position was? Yes, but I would not for worlds have changed it for any other. I was as close to a troop of these grand creatures as one could possibly be, even in zoological gardens, but under what vastly different circumstances! No heavy, iron prison-bars caging the lazy hairy monsters as they pace to and fro in sullen brooding silence; no barrow-loads of old horse-flesh; no staring crowd of gaily-dressed holiday-seekers; no endless babble of human voices! No! here have gathered together the deep-voiced kings and queens of the forest from out their cool mid-day retreat—great, active, powerful brutes, as free and untrammelled as the wind that gently stirs the tufted crest of yon old monster! Here they tread with silent but heavy footfall upon rustling brown grasses, their splendid leader standing well to the front, with dark tangled mane—to which cling twigs of wait-a-bit thorns—sweeping the grass-tops, his jet-black lips slightly parted, disclosing the red gums, and every now and then the great rough tongue between his gleaming tusks, as he pants gently, perhaps after a sharp trot along the spoor of yesterday, his ears laid half back in an attitude of caution, and his black tail-tuft slightly twitching. There the large-limbed lionesses, wanting the proud serene look of their lord—a typical savage each one—glaring around with great watchful eyes, changeable in colour as the many-hued opal, and licking their jaws in anticipation of the coming feast. And all around deep silence. Far up in the darkening sky, on motionless wings, sailed two vultures, wondering, perhaps, if any scraps will be left for them and their fellow-scavengers, the hyænas, after such a concourse of guests has left. The leaves of the trees are gently, noiselessly stirred by the cool evening breeze; the glowing sun drops down in crimson splendour behind yon far-distant line of trees, though

his burning mantle trails behind, as though he were loath to yield his sceptre to the Queen of Night! Could one ever forget such a scene?

I am quite certain that from the very first the large black-maned lion had noticed wonderingly the altered aspect of the place, slight though the alterations were, and his suspicions were aroused: indeed at one time I believed he had seen me—indistinctly perhaps—through the thorn-branches that formed the *scherm*, but still he was conscious of my being near at hand. The long grass had been trampled down for 6 or 8 yards all round the carcass, and as the lion reached the edge of this he glanced behind him uneasily, and at intervals gave utterance to a deep musical "Aa—ow!" This may have been a warning signal, but the others took very little notice of it. Suddenly, with low growls, the three cubs sprang forward to the carcass and commenced tearing at it, swearing volubly at one another the while. Then the yellow-maned lion and one of the lionesses trotted heavily forward and stood broadside very close to me, though partially hidden by the corner of the *scherm*; but still the old black-mane retained his position, standing perfectly still, and seeming never to take his eyes off me.

The excitement of thus watching inactive became painfully intense, and I longed for the moment when the other black-maned lion should advance and give me a chance to do something. It was strange that at first none of the other lions noticed me, or if they did, they gave no sign; and I do not hesitate to say that, if my object had been just to make a bag without regard to age or sex, it was the chance of a lifetime,—for of the nine lions, the farthest was less than 60 yards away, and the nearest about a dozen yards. By firing one barrel at the black-mane, and then taking the others at haphazard, I would not care to say what it would have been possible to do. As it was, however, my mind was fully made up to try for both the black-maned lions first, and not to fire a shot till at least one of them was grassed. Two of the lionesses standing side by side on my left now commenced licking each other, uttering loud purring sounds of pleasure, and were thus engaged when a harsh deep growl from the big black-maned lion, as he sprang suddenly away, called them all off amidst a chorus of angry grunts.

Once again I breathed freely, and was glad to be able to relax my attitude of silent watchfulness, and to slightly change my position; yet I felt a little disappointed at the same time, as it was rapidly getting dusk, and although I was not at all afraid of the lions failing to return, I was anxious that they should do so while there was still light enough left to shoot by. I might have gone out towards them and tried for a shot in the open; but considering the lateness of the hour, the bad light, and the great length of the grass, I felt sure that any such attempt would end in failure.

The lions cleared off to where the second black-mane had been standing, and then all trotted heavily away amongst some bushes, where for a few moments I lost sight of them; but not for long, as I soon saw four or five advancing again, followed by the remainder, with the exception of the one old lion that from the first had refused to approach. It was very annoying, but there was no help for it; and as the light was getting very bad, I resolved to fire at the big black-mane as soon as I had a chance, and then be guided by circumstances. The lions came up on my left, and when about 40 yards distant the black- and the yellow-maned lions turned out, and, making a slight detour, approached my *scherm* from behind and a little to the right: another 30 yards in that direction and they would have winded me. Suddenly, as the remainder came up to the edge of the grass, they made a simultaneous forward rush to the carcass, one lioness getting up on to the giraffe's neck, and apparently looking at me, though she was doubtless watching the two lions behind my *scherm*. I dared not move a muscle to try and ascertain the position of these two, and I began to feel a little doubtful as to how it would all end—when in a silent, ghostly fashion, the yellow-maned lion glided round the corner of my *scherm*, stopped an instant, then looked full at me through the screen of bushes! His whole demeanour changed instantly, his eyes glared, his ears were depressed, and his lips retracted as he snarled threateningly; then on the instant he dropped into a crouching attitude in the grass, facing me, within a few paces, with his head down on his forepaws. Some of the lionesses jumped away on hearing the snarling, and stood watching the *scherm*; while the old black-maned lion trotted forward, stood, and again moved towards me, uttering

two or three quick, deep growls. It was "now or never." The shot was an awkward one, as I had to twist myself round to the right, a movement that caused the yellow-maned lion to growl threateningly; but I got a quick sight, and next instant fired. The old lion dropped in his tracks!

Dimly through the smoke, in the commotion that followed, I saw the yellow lion in front of me spring to his feet, holding his head low, his basilisk eyes glaring into mine, and his tail jerking up stiff and straight. I believe he would have been into the *scherm* next instant, but I was quite cool then, and gave him the left-barrel instantly, aiming slightly on one side of his head, the bullet raking his lungs. Down he went with a horrid growl, stumbling on to his head; then recovering his feet, he dashed off, and rolling over in the grass again about 20 yards away, uttered a loud choking roar, and fell dead. Before he was down I had the empty shells out and one cartridge in; but whilst fiddling with the other, which in my haste I dropped, to my surprise the great black-mane again sprang to his feet, and, charging through the smoke so close to the *scherm* that he swept off a branch of thorns, bounded towards a small bush just on the other side of the dead lion, seized it in his teeth, and rolled over on the other side of it, roaring tremendously. I fired the one barrel which I had reloaded, as he dashed past, a snap-shot, and missed—in fact it all happened so quickly I scarce took aim.

With both barrels reloaded I again turned my attention to the other lions, which now stood about in the grass on the other side of the dead giraffe, glancing uneasily from side to side, but making no attempt whatever to clear off. I think this was because, although they heard so much noise, they did not yet realise what it was. The only two that had actually seen me being now down, one dead, and the other at any rate badly wounded, I now saw the splendid dark lioness standing on the edge of the grass, broadside on, under a little bush, and looking in my direction, and was about to give her a shot, when another lioness and one of the cubs jumped up from behind the carcass and ran across to my right. The very instant she crossed my wind her thoughts flew to the safety of the cub, and she became the worst I had to deal with. Stopping short, she turned round and came straight towards me, looking a truly dangerous customer, with

her great muscular bowed legs, lithe quarters, and "sweet open countenance." "Thus far shalt thou come, but no farther," I said to myself, as I marked a small bush about 25 yards distant. Before she reached it she jerked her tail up straight, and rushed forward. Fair on the point of the shoulder I caught her. Three or four wild backward jumps, and away she dashed in the direction in which the old lion lay, still roaring at intervals. The others sprang off at the same time, and I fired the left barrel at the dark lioness as she went away with the rest, but missed her, high—as I found out in the morning.

I was alone,—all the wild excitement of the past twenty minutes over; one lion was dead, another and a lioness hard hit.

All had gone, and gone with the light; for although the moon was up, she as yet gave no fair light, her rays only attaining full power when all traces of daylight are gone. It was just that glimmering dusk so fatal to good shooting, but I made up my mind to go out and try to give the wounded lion a finishing shot, as I had heard him roaring at intervals, and knew that he still lived. I could then cover him up to prevent jackals spoiling the skin. But I waited half an hour longer till the moon gained more power, then, after taking a toothful of whisky from my flask (it was getting very cold, reader—for no other earthly reason), I crept out towards where the poor brute lay, guided by his deep moans of pain. I carefully avoided the spot where the yellow lion lay, though I felt sure he was dead. As to the lioness, I was far less easy in my mind about her. However, there was no help for it, and cautiously, on hands and knees, I crept to the bush behind which I could hear and fancied I could see the lion. He appeared to be some 10 or 15 yards on the other side of this bush; so on reaching it—which I did without noise, though my heart seemed to thump audibly—I came to a kneeling position.

Snap! a little branch broke under foot, and, with deep full roar that nearly made me drop my rifle, the glorious old fellow rose to his feet. I saw at a glance that he had overlooked me, and was staring towards the *scherm*. In another instant the trigger is pressed, and with a deep hoarse groan he fell dead on the spot. I felt like performing a war-dance there and then, but wiser resolutions prevailed; so I quickly covered the lion up,

and then advancing cautiously to the yellow lion, and assuring myself that he also was defunct, I performed the last rites for him. I could neither hear nor see the wounded lioness, and, believe me, I did not go far to look for her, but regained the *scherm* as quickly as I could, had a good smoke, and pulling the blanket over my head, laid my rifle across my knees, and envied no man.

I kept watch for some hours, but, as I thought there was no chance of the lions returning, gradually allowed myself to drop off to sleep.

Of course I dreamed (who would not after such an exciting evening?), and thought that May came and was dragging the lions away. I could distinctly hear him as he pulled the carcasses along through the grass! I ran to stop him, and the idea of movement caused me to awake. It was about 3.30 A.M., the cool, clear moon hurrying towards its setting, its bright rays hidden by the trees, so that all round the *scherm* but an uncertain flickering light prevailed. Looking round, to my astonishment there lay the other black-maned lion—a grand old beast, very little if any at all inferior in point of size to the one I had killed—behind the carcass, tearing at it greedily. Another, a lioness, lay in the grass a few yards off, and a second lioness was dragging a fore-quarter of the giraffe along in front of a *scherm*. It was this sound I heard and connected with my dream. In some way I must have alarmed them, as the lioness dropped the drag and jumped away a few yards, growling. The lion stopped eating, but did not get up.

Rising on one knee, I aimed full at the lion's chest: I had first thought of waiting till dawn, but I was fearfully cold, and the idea of watching there in shivering silence for another two hours was not a tempting one; besides, I knew I was discovered, and they might clear off. Unfortunately I could not see my front sight at all, but the lion was so close that I believe the bullet would have found him if I had fired; yet I changed my mind, and drew the striker across the blue-light.

It was a miserable mistake, and I deserved to fail as I did, for the light was so fixed as to command the direction in which the lions had come; consequently, as the black-mane was lying on the other side of the giraffe, he was just in the shade on the

edge of the rays cast by the light, and not sufficiently far from it to allow the moonlight by contrast to show him up. The lioness offered an easy shot, but I was not going to leave the lion for her; so as he jumped to his feet I fired the right barrel—into the dead giraffe!—the lion sprang away, off went the left barrel—into space! I felt so mad with myself that even my previous success offered no consolation, for I clean threw this chance away. One can put up with failure the result of accident, but when it is the result of one's own gross stupidity, it is not so easily forgiven.

I did not care to follow them up in such a poor light and long grass, so I had to put up with the result of my folly, and chew the cud of reflection. Never act hastily in such cases: lions are not easily driven away from a carcass, and a quarter or half an hour's grace is never time wasted.

The boys did not show up at dawn, so I walked towards camp and met them about half-way. I then sent one back to call all the boys and dogs, as I expected we might have to follow up the lioness a long way. I went with the other boy back to the *scherm*, and soon after F—— turned up; so we put the dogs on to the spoor of the wounded lioness. We found blood and a large splinter of bone (by the way she jumped about the previous evening I had fancied I had hit her in the hind-leg, though could not understand how that could have happened, as she was facing me when I fired). We followed it for about a hundred yards, then it turned short back towards the dead lion. Rover now ran ahead, stopped short, sniffed on the ground, then turning towards us, lazily stretched himself, while looking at us slyly and saying (for Rover *can* talk), "Come along, you fellows; what the mischief are you so slow about? Surely you're not afraid of a dead lioness!"

Yes, there she lay cold and stiff, shot through the lungs: she had doubtless fallen dead where we found her. The jackals, or other vermin, had sadly torn her skin on one side during the night, so it was just as well that I had covered up the two lions, which were only about 20 yards from her. Thus ended the most eventful night—in consideration of the sport obtained—that I have ever experienced, and the like of which I can possibly never again hope to have.

We did not follow up the troop, as we thought they would return, which, however, they did *not* do. We rode up next morning at dawn, but the meat had not been touched, save by some wandering hyæna.

Three days afterwards I was down with fever, through which I was attended by my friend F—— and Mr Gotto, a gentleman who was shooting in company with the Messrs Barber. It was entirely owing to the unwearying attention of both, the skill of the latter, and the possession of a sound constitution, that I pulled through at all, and to both of them I tender grateful thanks.

Our boys saw the seven remaining lions again not far from the same spot. F—— was chasing a waterbuck bull, and passed through a grove of thorn-trees, entered later by the boys following his spoor on foot. When half-way through it the lions jumped up, and, after staring hard for a few minutes, quietly trotted off and disappeared in the bush. But I was beyond lion-shooting then, and they were doubtless far away when F—— returned to the spot.

The black-maned lion measured over all from nose to tail-tip 10 feet 5 inches; as he lay, cold and stiff in the morning, 9 feet 6 inches between two assegais at nose and tail, in a straight line; the flat skin, not unduly stretched, 10 feet 10½ inches; shoulder height slightly under 3 feet 8 inches; girth of fore-arm 1 foot 7 inches; length of skull 16½ inches. The yellow lion, which had a very poor mane, but was an old and heavy beast, measured 9 feet 1 inch; the flat skin 9 feet 3 inches; both the upper canine teeth were broken. The lioness measured 8 feet 3 inches, but the hide was worthless, being too much torn by the jackals.

Having made reference to the untimely dose of fever which knocked me over, I may as well state here that my friend had a good bit of fun with a large male leopard, close to the camp, during the time I was laid up. He wounded it one evening, but it was too dark to do anything that day, so next morning he took up the spoor with some of the boys. It evaded them for some time by creeping from cover to cover, but at last one of our drivers sighted it in a thick patch of thorns. He fired at it and hit it in the foot, when it immediately sprang upon him, biting his arm, and then endeavouring to seize him across the loins.

Most luckily for the boy, he was wearing on his belt a stout tin-lined cartridge-pouch, which had slipped round his belt to the back, and this the leopard mauled vigorously, and before he found out the difference between tin and flesh, one of our Swazi hunters arrived on the scene, and putting a double-barrelled shotgun against the leopard's shoulder, pulled both triggers, and effectually let daylight into him. It was a splendidly marked brute, of the intermediate form, with very irregular markings.

Sooner or later in the course of every sportsman's experience with dangerous game, he is almost sure to find himself at some time placed in one of those awkward predicaments from which Providence alone, or sheer good luck, can extricate him. I do not refer to the danger in which he may be placed, say, from the charge of a wounded animal,—a lion maybe, or a buffalo,—for that must come in the ordinary course, and in the case of lions is almost unavoidable: he *may* be charged by his first, but most assuredly he will have some such experience by the time he has fairly bagged ten. But these are all risks that he knows he must run, and if only they are *coolly met*, the danger is reduced to a minimum. It is impossible here to summarise the particular predicaments which I have suggested, seeing that they are always exceptional and unexpected, but I may instance a miss-fire just at the critical moment, with only 15 or 20 yards between you and a charging rhinoceros or buffalo; or the case of a man treed by a lion, when for some reason or other he is either unarmed or inadequately armed (I have heard of an instance of a man being treed for hours by a *dead* lion, or rather treeing himself from a dead lion; but that scarcely comes under the category of awkward predicaments, and is, I should think, very exceptional). Then, again, one might be going down to a pool to bathe, armed only with a towel and a cake of soap, and come suddenly on a lioness and cubs; or, as lately happened to me in Nyasaland, he might be drinking at a pool—his most formidable weapons a pipe and box of matches—and on raising his head find a frowsy, bad-tempered old buffalo bull taking stock of him from the other side of the narrow and shallow pool. So it is evident that many such cases might happen, as, though exceptional, they are quite within the bounds of possibility. I had such an experience nine years ago, and do not mind admit-

ting that at the time I got a thorough scare, and only wonder that on the morning after that eventful night my hair still retained its normal colour. I will here narrate the incidents as they occurred, even though it be but a tale of bad luck, misfortune, and failure, and cost me the life of one of the best and pluckiest shooting-horses I ever owned.

I was hunting in company with the G——s (father and son), well-known and successful hunters in the district, and for some weeks we had made our headquarter camp on the Timbabati river, a little above the kopjes. We had only just returned to our head camp after an unsuccessful trip (so far as the special object of the trip was concerned) down the Oliphant river in search of hippos, and had decided to make a move to another district.

All was bustle and stir, therefore, at our camp that fine June morning, and each member of our party had his hands full; for there were tents to strike and roll up; horse-cribs to take down and stow away; pots, pans, and kettles to be collected; skins, horns, and heads innumerable to be attended to by their respective owners; contrary oxen to be trooped and inspanned—no light task, by the way, after they had been kicking up their heels for some weeks past amongst the rich, tempting buffalo-grass on the shady banks of the river; and finally the formidable thorn-fence—outside whose magic circle grim lions had prowled and serenaded us night after night—had to be pulled down to allow the waggons to move out.

Everything was clear at last, the waggons presenting something of the appearance of a travelling museum, with their loads of horns and heads; black hairless old buffaloes, with their gnarled horns, resting side by side with the sharp scimitar-horned heads of the fighting sable; horns, skulls, and masks of the clumsy waterbuck, the stately koodoo, and graceful impala; while in strange juxtaposition lay the long heads and necks of lordly giraffes, and the grim skulls and tawny hides of lions.

The brakes were unscrewed, the leaders at the heads of their respective spans, and, amidst the eager barking of dogs, the fiendish yelling of drivers and leaders, the cracking of whips, and the ceaseless chatter of a troop of grivet monkeys excitedly watching our operations from the topmost boughs of a great spreading

fig-tree across the river—the train moved off in a southerly direction, heading up the river towards Sitiyana's lonely kop.

Mounting our willing nags, after a brief final search around and amongst the bushes for forgotten articles, we cantered ahead to pilot the way through the bush. The country being very rough, heavily wooded, and broken up into numerous dongas on the west bank of the river, we took advantage of a fairly good drift through an extensive reed-bed, and got on to good travelling ground on the other side.

Here we separated, G—— remaining by the waggons as pilot, while his son H—— and I struck off from the river to try for a shot; it being arranged that the waggons should trek for about three hours in a S.S.E. direction, and then outspan at the nearest water and light up a signal-fire. H—— and I were not long away from the waggons when we separated, having fired at two impala rams out of a small troop; and H—— having secured a good head, carried it back to the waggons. In the meanwhile I rode on alone, holding pretty well the course of the river, as I expected H——, as soon as he had put the impala on the waggon, would continue along the banks, and that we should eventually meet somewhere ahead.

About an hour after, I heard a shot fired close to me in some very dense impala-bush between me and the river, and I kept a sharp look-out for game breaking; but, seeing nothing, I rode on, keeping then slightly away from the river. But the country was very stony and dry, and game scarce, and after riding for another couple of hours, being unwilling to tire my horse unnecessarily, I off-saddled, and, after lighting my pipe, climbed a handy tree to look round. I judged that the waggons should then be outspanned, but, to my dismay, on looking round for the signal-fire (a column of smoke in one spot, made by heaping green grass and bushes on the fire), I saw that the whole country was alight, and in every direction dark columns of smoke rose from the half-parched acaciæ and the patches of thick, thorny undergrowth along the banks of dongas and streams; whilst here and there, where the fire swept through long dry reed-beds, a denser, blacker pillar shot high up in air, spreading out like a dark pall overhead, while long forked tongues of flame lapped round its base. It was a fine sight, but somewhat disconcerting under the cir-

cumstances. Sityana's kop, too, I could see was ablaze, and hyrax and klipspringers were doubtless having a warm time of it. But the shadows warned me that I must be moving, so, taking a final look around, which decided me to strike down to the river and try and cut the spoor, I carefully pocketed my pipe and proceeded to clamber down.

I had scarcely moved from my perch when I noticed my horse, which had been grazing near by, suddenly prick up his ears and stand staring in the direction of the fire, which was sweeping along the ridge to the east. The next moment a fine bull giraffe came in sight, heading directly towards me. As I scrambled hastily down he came full into view, followed by cows and calves, nine in all. There was no time to catch my horse—in fact, he stood between the bull and me—and the giraffe had pulled up and was critically surveying this, to him, strange creature. He saw me at once, however, as I ran out towards him, gave another stare, moved on about 20 yards, then turned and stood broadside at about 90 yards. Taking aim fair on the massive shoulder, I fired, and heard the bullet, a solid 590 grains, clop loudly on the glistening chestnut hide. The bull shook all over for a second, then swishing his long tail sharply once or twice, and curling it up over his haunches, he made off after the troop, now in full flight. I gave him another bullet, three-quarter shot, but it failed to stop him, so I followed on foot for about a mile; but though I came pretty close up with three cows, at which I would not fire, I never obtained another shot at the old bull.

Intensely disappointed and annoyed with myself for firing at the giraffe at all under the circumstances, I returned to where I had left my nag, saddled-up, and started off towards the river. After riding for about three-quarters of an hour, I crossed some waggon-spoor; but after examining it carefully, and riding along it a little way to ascertain the direction in which it led, I decided that it was not ours, but that of a party of Boer hunters whom we knew were in the neighbourhood. Just before striking the river I spotted a very fine old impala ram, but not knowing how far I might yet have to ride, would not even carry the head, but hung it up in a tree, intending to get it next day. Immediately afterwards I came on the river, fully an hour earlier than I had

expected to do; and then it became evident that it took a big easterly bend here, and that in all probability the waggons would no longer have continued along the banks, but have left the river and struck over in a more westerly direction. As it was getting late in the afternoon, I decided to cross the river and ride over towards Sitiyana's kop, distant about ten miles, but hoping to meet the waggons or cross their spoor before I got so far. Riding down the bank of a thickly wooded donga, a small troop of waterbuck ran out, headed by a particularly fine bull, which I think was the largest I had ever seen. I could not resist the temptation of trying to secure such a grand head, and at once gave chase. But the dongas were rough and numerous just about there, and for a time the old bull blinked me in a double spruit; but I quickly made him out again as he rejoined the cows, and raced hard after him, although it was far from desirable riding-ground — rough, stony, and thickly wooded. Suddenly in the long grass I noticed a large fallen tree-trunk right across the course. There was no avoiding it, and under ordinary circumstances my gallant nag would have cleared it with ease; but as I was steadying him at the take off, we found ourselves on the very brink of a game-pit, across which the tree lay. But it was too late, for even as I dug the spurs in, and he rose to the leap, I felt that he had missed his stride. Next moment he struck a dead branch that stood out from the fallen trunk, and came down, sending me flying over his head, well scratched by the thorns, but otherwise unhurt. My poor nag, however, fell badly, with his chest against the edge of the pit, which, however, luckily, was filled up to within a few feet of the surface. Still, I had much difficulty in extricating him, and when I did so he lay down at once after I had loosened the girths, with a little blood coming from his nostrils. But in half an hour or so he recovered and stood up, and began to nibble some grass, so I led him down to the river, but he would not drink, and it was in no enviable frame of mind that I led him along, again heading for the kop.

Want of a definite plan was the cause of my undoing that night; for as soon as I saw that my horse commenced to drag, I gave up the idea of going to the kop, and turned back to the river, which I recrossed, thinking it best, as it was then getting

dark, to hold the bank down as far as where we crossed in the morning, and camp at our old spot, taking up the spoor of the waggons next day. I struck some matches here and there to see if I could find any spoor, then fired half-a-dozen signal-shots; but no, nothing but the untrodden grass lay beneath my feet, and the echoes of my shots died away in complete silence, without any answering reports to lead me to where the waggons were camped.

By keeping to the river, however, I knew I could not go wrong, and that daylight must disclose the spoor; so I kept on and on, always heading towards our old camp, and quite careless as to what might be prowling about. Just as my poor nag began to show signs of being unable to proceed farther, I reached a dense grove of impala-bush, which I at once recognised as the spot where I heard the shot fired in the morning, after parting from H——, so I immediately decided to camp. But as the bush was very dense and uncommonly suggestive of lions, I led my nag out into an open glade—the same through which I had ridden in the morning—covered with long dry grass, and with a solitary thorn-tree in the middle of it. To this tree I led my horse, and tied him to a small bush by the side of it, whilst I set about collecting sticks for a fire.

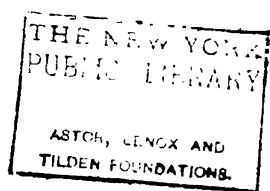
Whilst looking round for these, I came on the carcass of a giraffe, which had been dead about three or four days, and had been partly eaten by lions and hyænas. After collecting some wood, to my dismay I discovered that I had lost my matches, they probably having fallen whilst I was searching for the spoor (and occasionally striking a light) away back up the river; but, after an anxious search in my pockets, I succeeded in finding the head half of a Tand-stickor, with which, by careful nursing, I soon produced a small but cheery blaze.

The moon also now came up, silvering first the dark tops of the acaciæ, then—as she climbed higher in the eastern sky—flooding the grassy glade with waves of soft light, and even searching out little spots in the dark funereal shade of the impala-bushes to bathe with her radiance.

After making a small *scherm*—or rather a screen only, for I could not dignify it by the name of *scherm*—with a few thorn-branches and dry grass, and within a couple of yards of which



"My eyes rested upon the form of a huge lion as he sprang towards my horse."



my horse was lying down, I started my pipe going, and put the tail of the impala, which I had cut off, on to the fire to grill for supper—not a very substantial one, by the way, seeing that it was tiffin, dinner, and supper all thrown into one. However, but for my anxiety in respect of my poor horse I could have borne matters philosophically enough, as I knew I should find the waggons early next day; but when I looked at his glazing eyes and trembling limbs, I felt sick at heart indeed, fearing the worst. But I was dead-tired myself, so, after eating my gristly mouthful seasoned with wood-ashes in lieu of salt, and making my horse as comfortable as I could under the circumstances, I laid my rifle, loaded, against the tree, dragged the saddle under my head, and was soon hunting in dreamland.

I cannot say what it was that awakened me, but it was not cold, or surfeit of sleep, and certainly not indigestion consequent upon over-eating. I suppose it was some providential warning of danger conveyed to me in my sleep. When one has become inured to all the exigencies of a hunter's life, he awakes from the deepest sleep in full possession of all his faculties. There is no passing through the transition stage of half-awake, during which he would wonder "Where the deuce am I?" He just takes up the thread of events, in fact, from the time when he was last awake, and follows them accurately up to the moment of reawakening.

Thus it was, fortunately, with me. I knew I was in danger, and instantly reached out my hand for my rifle, and as I did so, I saw the gleaming eyes of a lioness looking at me through the little low fence of thorns. By stretching across I could easily have touched her,—could see her hot breath coming from her mouth like smoke into the cold night air, and hear her heavy breathing even more distinctly than I could my own. As I seized my rifle, she sprang up with a low growl, and jumped away a few paces as I regained my feet. At the same second of time my eyes rested upon the form of a huge lion, with a heavy dark mane, looking twice his natural size under the spectral moonlight, as he sprang from the grass towards my horse. The latter, with a wild snort of fear, avoided the spring by throwing his body over to one side, almost striking me with his hoofs, and scattering the embers of the fire in all directions. The lion in some way caught him just over the eye with his claws, inflicting a deep gash, and then

landed in the grass almost at my feet, where he crouched growling. The whole affair scarcely occupied ten seconds of time, and to say that I felt thoroughly scared is no more than the truth; but when I found myself standing at the fire, with rifle at full-cock, and my finger near the trigger—I dared not *feel* it, for fear some nervous action should cause me to pull—I recovered much of my self-possession, and awaited events with a coolness of which I did not believe I was capable.

Although the lion was so close to me, I could not make him out, as the grass was very long; but he kept up a continuous growling, so I knew pretty well where he lay. I made sure he would have jumped on me; but as he still lay in the grass and made no sign, I concluded he did not care to attempt it, his real object having been to secure the horse. Glancing towards the lioness, I saw that she had vacated her post and stood in the long grass some 20 yards distant to my right, and slightly behind me. Had either charged then, nothing could have saved me; and if the lion had not been so close, or I had been armed with a double rifle, I would certainly have shot the lioness, for she stood splendidly, and thus have left myself with only one to deal with. But as it was, I considered the risk too great, my rifle being only a single .500 express.

Suddenly the lion sprang up and bounded towards the spot where the lioness stood. As he passed me, I fired into him at once: he answered with a deep "Woof!" and stopped short for a second, staggering heavily, then, turning quickly round, he came at me, grunting hoarsely. Dropping my rifle, I sprang up the tree, expecting every minute to feel his claws clutching me and to be dragged down for the final act. He only came up to the little fence, however, then turned and walked slowly off towards his mate; and as he moved away I slipped down and picked up my rifle, regaining my seat on the only branch that there was less than 15 or 20 feet from the ground. He heard me, and again stopped and turned round, when I fired right into his face; but I must have missed him, for he took no notice of the shot. The lioness, however, sprang away growling into the bush, in the direction of the dead giraffe; but the lion was too badly hit by my first shot, and at once lay down in the grass out of sight, but keeping up continuous hoarse moan-

ing roars. I should have gone out then and tried to give him another shot, but I felt it was better to leave him awhile, and so decided to wait till dawn.

In the meantime, immediately after my second shot, I heard another close to me near the river on my right, followed quickly by another, and then a chorus of dogs and human voices! I took in the situation at once—either the waggons were outspanned near at hand, or, what seemed less likely, it was a search-party out to look for me. The rest is soon told. Incredible as it may seem, I had actually been camping out within 400 yards of the waggons, which were just over the river. The bush being too thick on the east side, they had tried to recross and got stuck fast, breaking a *disselboom*; this of course delayed them, and prevented them from trekking as far as had been agreed upon. As soon as my friends heard my shots, which they took for signals, they fired in reply. I would not leave the spot, however, till I had satisfied myself about the lion, which after a time had ceased roaring, and was probably, I thought, dead; so I called some boys from the camp to bring me some water, whilst I had a look round for the lion. But the grass was very long and the light too bad for such work; so I soon returned to my *scherm*, where the boys joined me.

At earliest dawn we went over to the spot where I had last seen the lion, but to my great disappointment he had gone,—only the torn-up grass-roots, sodden with blood, indicated the place where he had lain down, though I cannot imagine how he had moved off without my seeing him. We took the spoor along as far as some very dense bush, which was so thick we had to give it up,—nothing weaker than a buffalo or less supple than a lion could have penetrated it.

Had I been alone, I would have remained and hunted that lion up at all costs; but my friends were anxious to push on to another camp, and, besides, my poor horse required attention. But I have ever since regretted leaving that lion, and I would willingly give up many of the trophies I have taken from them before and since to become the possessor of the dusky skin and grinning skull of the disturber of that most eventful night I have ever passed in the bush.

My companions had been naturally anxious about me, and had

continually fired signal-shots at dark, and even exploded a charge of dynamite in an old tree; but I had been far away at the time, so all these sounds were unheard by me. My poor horse died that day, and was buried under a gigantic acacia on the banks of the river, in the heart of that wild Low Country through which he had often carried me gallantly after the flying game; but under the shade of whose scented groves he shall never more clip the sweet buffalo-grass, and whose rolling ridges shall never again echo to the sound of his hoofs. The graceful koodoo and stately giraffe shall wander timorously around his grave, and perchance pluck the tender sprays from the trees overhead; the hyæna shall laugh weirdly about the spot; and the lordly lion in the neighbouring reeds shall rouse the slumbering forest echoes with his thunder: but Ehlanzeni sleeps on, and shall never waken more!

And now, courteous reader, my task is nearly done. We have hunted and shot together during many days, and with varying fortune. Sometimes unlooked for success has rewarded our efforts, while at others our disappointment has been keen and not unreasonable; but we have been content to take the good with the bad. We have turned the whistling reedbuck out from his bed of ferns; have seen the oribi bounding away before us over the sloping hillside; whilst time and again the wily duiker has sprung up from the long grass at our feet. When we were in good form we bagged him, but more frequently he has saved his glossy grey hide for another day. We have seen the agile klipspringer bounding from crag to crag, and the quaint little 'msumbi dodging our dogs from cover to cover. The beautiful solitary bushbuck has challenged us in the early mornings "on the skirts of grey forests"; the tough old bushpig has fallen beneath our assegais or those of our native allies; and the graceful koodoo, fairly stalked in his own domains, on the misty hillside krantz, has bowed his proud head before our rifles.

The grim buffalo has grudgingly yielded us his spoils; and by day and night, through kloofs and over krantzes, we have sought the beautiful savage leopard, and more than once have faced him fairly, and stopped his lightning charge with a cool shot,—our

shouts of success ringing through the dark kloof while still his last gasping roar is in our ears.

Together we have trekked down on to the flats of the Low Country and gazed delightedly at the troops of game thundering over the sandy ridges—Burchell's zebra, wildebeeste, sassaby, and impala; the heavy waterbuck has met us by every river-bank, and at night we have lain awake listening to the tittering jackals, the hyæna's shriek, and the distant roaring of the lions. We have seen the tireless hunting-dogs in full cry; and the sable—grandest of antelopes—has given us rattling sport, and drawn from us expressions of keenest admiration for his beauty and pluck.

The great harmless giraffe has not been entirely spared by our rifles, but he has evoked feelings of pity, and honest reflection, which will bear good fruits.

And, lastly, we have seen the desert chief, have listened through the night-watches to the thunder of his marvellous voice, have accepted the challenge to combat offered, and have conquered; but we have learned to respect him, and we scorn the idea of his being other than the "king of beasts."

And now we have trekked out with our many trophies, leaving far behind us the long sandy ridges and the glorious acacia-groves, over and through which our gallant nags have carried us bravely; the arid dry grass-flats over which we urged our jaded spans; the deep, still pools, the calm, smoothly flowing rivers, the glorious moonlight nights, the clear, cool mornings, the glaring mid-day heat; and the wild free life of the hunting-veldt is over. But it cannot fade from our memories whilst life lasts, and therefore, friend, I must ever remain your debtor. But I can at least return you hearty thanks for your companionship throughout these joyous days, and trust you will believe that I am more than amply repaid if in the smallest degree I have contributed to your pleasure.

CHAPTER XXIV.

SELECTION OF RIFLES, AND HINTS USEFUL OR OTHERWISE.

Practice *versus* theory—"Wild beasts and their ways"—The .303 rifle—An opinion worth having—The advantages claimed—Handiness and absence of recoil—Light cartridges an advantage—Absence of smoke—A strong argument in its favour—A corresponding disadvantage—Slightly greater accuracy and flat trajectory doubtful advantages—Another good claim—Too much penetration not required—Tweedie and Jeffries bullets—Only good for picked shots at the largest game—Gibbs' Metford—Surprising results—Two bull elands with one bullet—The .303 fails—Gives no blood-spoor—Summing up—Somewhat overrated—A candid opinion—Confirmation—Buffalo easy of approach—Another candid opinion—Rifles for big game—Thin-skinned, dangerous game—Penetration and effective killing-power not synonymous terms—Express rifles—Everything sacrificed to low trajectory—Sir Samuel Baker's opinion—Inefficient weapons—Principle good, if not carried *ad absurdum*—Modified Express—Hollow bullets—.461 Metford for lions—Lion at close quarters difficult to stop—Second to none—.450 *versus* .577—Breech-actions for single and double rifles—Field's patent—A matter of taste—Selection according to requirements—Horseback- *versus* foot-work—Repeating-rifles—"All-round weapons"—Tools and preservatives—Hints—The amateur's *vade-mecum*—Preparation of horned and other skulls—Packing—Beetles—Turpentine—Pegging-out skins.

THE question as to the most efficient and generally useful rifles for shooting the various kinds of game is a very wide one, and a matter upon which it is difficult to attempt to give entirely unprejudiced advice, seeing that the very fact of one's having formed an opinion implies a certain prejudice in favour of the style of weapon upon the efficiency of which he bases those opinions. Therefore the most that an individual sportsman can do is to give his experience, and leave others to form their own

judgment *pro* or *con*. And there should be no question as to the value of the opinion of any practical sportsman: theory is all very well, but it will bring neither lion nor buffalo to bag; nothing but practice and experience in the field can avail anything towards the attainment of success. It is so difficult a matter when one walks into a gunmaker's to avoid being led astray by any amount of plausible theory, though of course if a man *knows what he wants*, he will order and get it without any more ado. There is no doubt that one can always rely upon getting thoroughly good sound weapons from any of the leading gunmakers if he is prepared to pay the price for them; but the efficiency of these in the field is not always to be taken as quite such a matter of course.

The old question of large- *versus* small-bore rifles is still an open one. Every sportsman must have been strongly impressed by the advice and suggestions given by that veteran Nimrod the late Sir Samuel Baker in his last work, 'Wild Beasts and their Ways': he has ever stood in the front rank of the advocates of heavy, large-bore rifles; but still even the weight of his authority has not turned the scale in their favour, possibly because men of his build and physical strength are the exception, not the rule. But, on the other hand, neither have the opponents of heavy rifles scored any victory, not even though the introduction of the little .303 rifle as a sporting weapon has come to their assistance. It appeared to me, from the conversations I had when in England in 1893 with some of the leading gunmakers, that the tendency amongst them is to jump at conclusions too quickly, and to prophesy all sorts of wonderful results from this new weapon before it has had a fair trial. Now, without condemning this rifle, I am of opinion that it should be given such fair trial, its failures being recorded as well as its successes, and not be accepted out of hand as the rifle of the future. Not until this is done can any reliable judgment be formed upon the matter.

Amongst the first to bring this rifle before the notice of the sporting public has been my friend and erstwhile comrade in arms, Mr Henry T. Glynn, a keen and skilful sportsman of great experience; and his arguments in its favour have appeared over his name in the columns of the 'Field' upon several occasions. He has the courage of his opinion also, for he has lately ordered

other similar weapons from England; and, very naturally, his judgment, based upon practical experience of the rifle in question, is worth more than mine, or that of any one else who has never used it, and who, therefore, can but theorise.

But there are certain broad points connected with the question which even a theorist, if he has any knowledge of big-game shooting, can discuss; and as such I must admit I am by no means satisfied with the position taken up by the supporters of the '303.

Let us see, in the first place, what are the advantages claimed for this rifle; and then endeavour to ascertain whether these are real or imaginary. Be it remembered that I do not seek to become argumentative or to display undue prejudice; I merely wish to throw such light upon the question as shall assist—if even in a small degree—in enabling more competent judges than myself to get at the truth.

The advantages claimed are, I believe, four in number—viz., general lightness, handiness, and absence of recoil; absence of smoke; increased accuracy and flat trajectory; and great penetration. Now I think that most sportsmen in big-game countries will agree with me in dismissing the arguments in favour of the first of these as untenable, inasmuch as men who hunt in such countries are not, as a rule, of such slight physique as to be unable to handle a far heavier weapon with comfort, ease, and efficiency throughout a day's sport. A double '303, if a first-class weapon, will be less than 1 lb. lighter than a good double '450, and only about 4 lb. less than a double '577. As to recoil,—if using the larger bores at target practice, it will be just noticeable; but if fired at game, in the excitement of the chase, nothing less than a Magnum '577 will produce any recoil worth mentioning.

The cartridges are light certainly, and I have heard supporters of the '303 say, "You can put a hundred of these cartridges into your pocket and not feel the weight!" Granted,—but who wants to carry a hundred or even fifty cartridges for a day's sport, unless he be indeed on *slaughter* bent? Speaking for myself, the weight of an ordinary belt of cartridges—containing, say, thirty—troubles me so little that many a time I have worn the belt unthinkingly for hours after returning to camp. When on the march with carriers, one can take a large number of '303 cartridges without any trouble,—an unquestionable advantage, but

surely not sufficient of itself to warrant the adoption of the lighter weapon, unless something else can be urged in its favour.

The absence of smoke is, in my opinion, the strongest and only tenable argument yet advanced in favour of this rifle. Too well do I know the annoyance and risk occasioned by the dense cloud of smoke hanging round the muzzle of one's rifle, in the damp air of early morning, or in thick bush or other cover, when upon the other side of the smoke-cloud a wounded lion is crouching—growling for all he is worth—or an old buffalo, exasperated to retaliation, stands at the point of charging! And if they *do* charge under these circumstances, they will most assuredly go straight for the smoke! Nevertheless, this advantage of the absence of smoke is only obtained, be it remembered, by the use of nitro-powders, the tremendous strain of which upon a breech-action is, I think, not denied.

As to the increased accuracy and low trajectory, I cannot for the life of me understand this argument; because, practically speaking, a man armed with any ordinary accurately sighted Express or other rifle can place his bullet exactly where he wishes, supposing him to be a good shot; and if he fails to do this, he knows it is his own fault, not that of the rifle. Take the list of weapons used at any gun-trial and pick out that one which shows the *greatest* deviation in the flight of the projectile, and what does it amount to? Can any sportsman honestly say that he believes the $1\frac{1}{2}$ -inch or 2-inch deviation is going to make any difference to his shot, fired under the ordinary circumstances attendant upon big-game shooting? In such cases—that is, in what I may term rough shooting, where the shot has to be taken, perhaps, at an animal running through thick bush or bounding through cover, or when a man is winded after a long run or a stiff climb—he is satisfied if he places his bullet *within a hand's-breadth* of the spot he aims at—at least I know I am; and when in exceptional cases he wishes to shoot with as perfect accuracy as possible—as when a dangerous animal is charging, or giving a good standing shot—he has the weapon to do it with, if armed with *any* modern rifle by a good maker. Therefore I think that, while for target and long-range shooting the slightly greater accuracy and flatter trajectory which, owing to the small size of

the bore and greater initial velocity of its projectile, the '303 certainly possesses, is an advantage, I do not consider that it is one which will be appreciable under the circumstances which ordinarily obtain in big-game shooting. I have always used Metford rifles of late, and have found that in thick bush country, where most big-game is sought for, their point-blank range of 160 yards is ample for all requirements, and I never on any occasion require to shift my sights.

The next claim made for this rifle, that of penetration, is a good one, but it must not be taken out of hand as proving superiority. It is unnecessary to remind sportsmen that too much penetration in the case of soft-skinned dangerous game is almost as bad as too little. The bullet should have just sufficient penetration to pass through an animal, when fired from any angle, until it reaches the skin on the other side, *where it should remain*. If it goes clear *through*, half of its energy and striking force is wasted, instead of being expended upon the beast, as is necessary if the greatest possible shock to the system, the heaviest knock-down blow, is to be given.

For this kind of shooting—*i.e.*, soft-skinned dangerous animals—various forms of the Tweedie and Jeffries bullets are used with good results; indeed, when the size of the bore is taken into consideration, they certainly are most destructive weapons, the wound produced being incredibly severe, owing to the enormous velocity attained by the projectile.

But so also are good rifles of the larger bores: they make wounds as deadly as, not to say more so than, the '303, because, naturally enough, the heavier bullets, if possessing sufficient penetration, will produce a greater shock to the system of the animal struck than the smaller and lighter ones can do.

Then, as to the biggest game—elephants, rhinoceros, and buffalo; it is *only when picked shots* are obtained that these rifles are of any use on such animals, and in such cases other hard-driving rifles are certainly equally as efficient. At any rate, I can testify to the capabilities of two—the Gibbs' Metford, Nos. 1 and 2, No. 1 firing a long 75/540 cartridge, and No. 2 a 90/570. The latter rifle is the most destructive and efficient weapon I have ever seen in my life; and Mr Selous has very clearly demonstrated what can be done with these Metford rifles upon elephants and other big

game. With a Gibbs' Metford 90/570 I have obtained most surprising results, not, however, by my good shooting, for, as a matter of fact, I am an indifferent shot—the good qualities are in the rifle. With it I have killed a large bull elephant with a single shot, and several rhino with one bullet: on one occasion I dropped a big rhino bull in his tracks *with both shoulders smashed*. With *one* bullet I killed an eland bull and wounded another so severely that he only ran 150 yards and dropped dead; and on each of three occasions when hunting in Nyasaland I secured two Lichtenstein hartebeeste with *one* bullet. Another day, whilst hunting in the Elephant Marsh, I shot eight buffalo—seven big bulls and a cow—in eleven consecutive shots, two of which were clean misses. But, as I say, these were more or less picked shots; and if these animals had been hit anywhere except in a vital spot, they would have gone away practically unharmed, whether the rifle used had been a .303, .450, .500, or .577. My friend Mr H. A. Hillier, judicial consular officer at Tshiromo, British Central Africa, a fine shot and keen sportsman, on one occasion put three bullets from a .303 into a rhino bull and failed to bag him. If he had been armed with a 10-bore and 8 drams, the rhino would have been his at the first shot. The .303 would have a slight advantage, supposing that it could drive a bullet into the vitals of an elephant, rhinoceros, or buffalo, after entering at the buttock, the animal standing tail-on, or three-quarters away; but I do not know if it *will* do this: in any other position, another rifle will kill a picked shot equally well.

And now to sum up. The .303 is a handy and, within limits, efficient weapon, the cartridges which are used with it being so light and small that a far greater number of them can be carried than of those of larger bore rifles in an equal space. It has no recoil and practically no smoke, is absolutely accurate, possesses enormous penetration, a very flat trajectory, and is capable of producing very deadly wounds, notwithstanding the projectile is so small, owing to the high rate of speed at which it is driven.

In the matter of handiness and absence of recoil, I have endeavoured to show that such cannot be fairly claimed as advantages proving superiority, inasmuch as any man of ordinary strength and stature can use a heavier weapon with perfect ease; and that the recoil of such heavier weapons is not felt

when shooting at game any more than that of the '303. In that the nitro-powder used in the cartridges produces little if any smoke, this rifle can claim an important advantage; but the use of this powder is in itself a disadvantage, as it exercises too great a strain upon the chamber and breech-action of a rifle.

The rifle is very accurate, more so—but only in a slight degree—than a '450 or a '500 bore; in fact, the mean deviation of its projectiles is so little less than that of the projectiles of the larger bore as to be unappreciable when the weapons are used under the usual circumstances of big-game shooting.

Its penetration is very great, but it is admitted that this is a disadvantage when used upon thin-skinned animals; therefore bullets are now made for it which give just the penetration required—that is, such as any well-made '450 or '500 bore gives: but the bullets used in the latter rifles being heavier, will, *cæteris paribus*, give a greater shock to the system of the animal struck than the smaller bullets of the former. With the larger kinds of big game it possesses no advantage over '450- or '500-bore rifles: it will kill *picked shots*, so will they; but any one who is accustomed to big-game shooting in dense bush-country will know how much or how little value to attach to that, picked shots being unquestionably the exception, not the rule.

The fact is that from the first the '303 rifle has been greatly overrated. If its supporters would be satisfied to claim for the weapon great destructive powers upon thin-skinned beasts (I would here include the easily-killed giraffe, for although its hide is thick, any ordinary bullet quickly finds its vitals), then those who, like myself, prefer something heavier, would very willingly concede so much, even though we do not admit its superiority. But they would have us believe that it is efficient upon the biggest game, and that, armed with such a weapon, one does not require anything larger for elephant, rhinoceros, or buffalo. My friend Mr Glynn, an ardent advocate of the '303, in speaking to me lately, summed up the matter thus: "The '303 is a good weapon, and I shall stick to it. For koodoo and suchlike, and even for buffalo, I have found it perfect, *but for ponderous game one must have something heavier.*" This fully bears out the remarks made by Mr Coryndon in a letter to the 'Field,' wherein, while admitting the destructive powers of the '303 on *waterbuck*

and other antelopes, he strongly advises something heavier for the largest game.

Mr Glynn, it will be seen, included buffalo amongst the game that could be easily killed with the '303; but it is perhaps as well to remark that in the district where he was lately shooting buffalo—near the Pungwe river, on the south-east coast of Africa—buffalo were very numerous, and comparatively tame and easy of approach. I also found this to be the case in British Central Africa, so much so that picked shots were the *rule*, and any good driving rifle would have performed equally well, at any rate in my case.

A very distinct disadvantage of these small-bore rifles is that when any but the smaller antelopes are wounded by them, there is no blood-spoor upon which the sportsman can follow up his game and secure it. Any one who knows what sport is in thick bush-country will recognise how heavily handicapped one would be in such a case.

Mr Hillier, to whom I have made previous reference, writing me lately from Tshiromo, British Central Africa, says: "I wounded a big bull koodoo with my '303, but did not get him, though I am sure he was badly hit. I followed the spoor for some miles, but had to give in." And again: "I am not quite satisfied with '303; I am sure I do not get anything like all the game I hit with it." *Verbum sap.!*

Hitherto my remarks have been confined to the '303-bore rifle *versus* '450 and '500 bores, and I think I have said enough to prove that I for one am not an advocate for the use of these small-bores against the biggest game. These are to be bagged in either of two ways—by shooting the animal dead upon the spot, or by giving it such a paralysing shock that it shall be disabled and easily run into. Now in order to enable the sportsman to bag his animal on the spot, it is a *sine quâ non* that he shall obtain a picked shot, in which case he could use a small rifle ('303, '450, or '500) with as much success as he could one of larger bore—8 or 10. (When speaking of "picked shots," I mean such as a sportsman would obtain after stalking his game to within 50 yards, or even 100 yards, if he was using a smaller, and therefore more accurate, weapon.) But as the bigger bore will give a crushing blow and a paralysing shock to a beast, no

matter where he gets the bullet, while the small-bore would have no effect whatever in such a case, the advantages undoubtedly all lie with the former.

Now let us glance again for a while at another class of animals—thin-skinned but dangerous game, such as lions and leopards. I have shot these with .450- and .500-bore rifles, the bullet passing through lungs or heart, and yet they have charged. I have also shot them with heavy 10- and 12-bores: sometimes they have charged, but more frequently the heavy shock to the system has knocked all the charge out of them, even though they have not died at once.

Both lions and leopards are animals that die quickly when shot through the vitals, but even in the few moments of life left to them they can do a vast amount of damage. With such animals the great desideratum is not penetration alone, but accurate shooting, combined with due penetration *and* effective killing-power (the terms are not synonymous), which is obtained by giving a heavy shock to the system.

It must not be thought that I am advocating the use of big-bore rifles for lion- or leopard-shooting,—on the contrary, they are far too clumsy and wanting in the necessary accuracy; but I wish to show that I consider that rifle most suitable which has the most effective killing-power, combined with accuracy. The heavier the projectile used in combination with a fair powder-charge (the combination will be formed with a view to great accuracy), the greater will be the shock which the animal receives; and the greater the shock, the quicker he will succumb, and the less likely he is to do damage.

I have had occasion to mention Express rifles somewhat frequently, but have no wish to be understood as advocating their use—that is, in the exaggerated form in which they frequently appear nowadays, and wherein everything, even effective killing-power, is sacrificed to “low trajectory,” for reasons which I will explain. There is no question but that this class of rifles has become very popular of late years; nor can it be wondered at, considering their very low trajectory, and their efficiency against small, harmless, thin-skinned game. It is not surprising, therefore, that the late Sir Samuel Baker’s severe strictures upon this class of weapon called for much comment and some criticism.

And yet there is no doubt that fine old sportsman knew full well what he was writing about when he condemned the Express rifle of the present day—a weapon with an abnormally heavy powder-charge, and a bullet so ridiculously light that, as a well-known correspondent to 'Land and Water' has said, "It will blow to shreds upon striking a hare."

I should think that very few of those who advocate using such weapons for, say, tiger-shooting, have ever had to stop a tiger's charge on foot—unless, indeed, a tiger is easier killed than a lion or leopard; and as for some of the larger African antelopes, they laugh such toys to scorn. Instances have been multiplied to show that under some circumstances (usually those in which there is more than ever need for efficiency, such as when the sportsman is charged by a lion or tiger) this bullet is utterly untrustworthy, and Sir Samuel Baker mentions more than one case in point. But because the principle happens to be carried *ad absurdum*, it is not to declare it in itself faulty.

Study, above all things, to obtain effective killing-power, and combine it with the greatest accuracy that can be obtained; and do not reverse these qualities in order of merit. Have, in fact, a *modified form* of Express (that is, a weapon in which a fairly large powder-charge—but less than the usual maximum Express charge—is used in combination with a heavy, slightly hollowed, conical projectile: such a weapon is the Gibbs' Metford), and the weapon will at once commend itself to all practical sportsmen.

I believe in the hollow bullet within reason; but let the hollow be small, leaving substantial walls on either side, and shallow, so that if the point breaks up a heavy butt shall remain. Such a bullet will retain its component parts intact if it does not meet with too much bone-resistance, and the very smallest hollow is sufficient to cause it to "mushroom" out; while if the point should get smashed up by such contact, the heavy butt remains to travel on upon its destructive course.

A .461 Metford is perhaps as perfect a weapon for lion-shooting as one can desire. A bullet from this rifle, well placed, at 40 yards will stop almost any lion from attempting to charge; or if it does make the attempt, it will assuredly fall dead in the act. Of course if a lion has already started and is at close quarters,

he is very difficult to stop, and will do an infinity of harm even after receiving a mortal wound.

I believe that a .450 rifle can be made equally as effective as a .577; for the difference in the bore is not very great after all, and a .450 can be made to carry a far heavier bullet in comparison than a .577, as the latter becomes too clumsy and has too much recoil if anything more than the usual $5\frac{1}{2}$ or 6 drams and the 620-grain bullet be used.

For years I have used Gibbs' Metford rifles of .461 bore, and for all thin-skinned game, lions, and leopards, have never seen them beaten, if equalled. The Express charge for those rifles is 90 grains and a 360-grain hollow bullet. This is perfect for lions, leopards, and antelopes; and last year I shot four hippos with a similar charge. For so comparatively small a bullet it performs most wonderfully. A charge of 75 grains and 540-grain solid bullet can be used with the same rifle for long ranges, and is all that can be desired for hippos, buffalo, and giraffe. The bullet is of course hardened.

I have referred elsewhere to the splendid performances of another .461 Metford which Mr Gibbs built for me, carrying a charge of 90 grains and solid or hollow bullets of 570 grains; and I think it will be admitted that nothing better could be desired. Held straight, it will account for anything less than an elephant, and even for them on occasions, as I have shown, though these animals can only be killed with a small-bore rifle under special circumstances. Mr Gibbs has always given the greatest satisfaction with the weapons he has built for me; but I wish it to be clearly understood that in making particular mention of his name, I do not in any way suggest superiority over other first-class makers. That his weapons are second to none both in price and efficiency cannot be gainsaid, but that is not to say that those turned out by our other leading gun-makers are not as costly and as good—in fact, where these qualities obtain in all, it would be invidious to draw comparisons, because, especially where one finds himself suited with a certain make of rifle, naturally he will adhere to it, and his experience after that with those of other makers will be small.

Although believing that a .450 is the very smallest bore that a man should take in hand for use upon game of any size, I do

not think that rifles of very slightly larger bores possess any real advantage over the .450, always supposing that the charge and projectile used in the latter is carefully regulated.

My experience does not bear out the fact that a .577 will stop a charging lion better than a .450. If hit in the head, heart, or lungs, or if neck, fore-shoulders, back, or hind-legs be broken, any of these shots either kills the most dangerous of the carnivoræ outright, or places them entirely in one's power; and a .450 will do this as effectually as a .577. Hit anywhere else, neither .450, .500, nor .577 will stop them.

As regards breech-actions, I have found Field's patent the best for all-round hard work for single rifles; and it has the further advantage of being extremely simple in its mechanism. I have tried Martini, Swinburn, Westley-Richards' falling-block, and the Deeley-Edge, but like none of them so well as Field's sliding-block.

For heavy big-bore double rifles I prefer the under-lever double-grip action. This is all merely a matter of taste to a great extent: a man accustomed to a certain action feels awkward with any other. But for dangerous game double rifles should always be carried, not so much for the sake of the extra chance it gives one—for single breech-actions are now so rapidly manipulated that the difference is but slight—as for the greater safety ensured in case of a charge or a miss-fire.

In choosing a weapon, the sportsman will further do well to consider whether he is likely to hunt in "fly-country" or not, as in the former case horses cannot be used. The bush here is usually of a denser character, and the sportsman will be intent upon the larger game—rhinoceros or buffalo—and would necessarily have a large-bore rifle with him, carried by a boy, though retaining his lighter weapon as well. If hunting on horseback out of "fly," a fairly light rifle is a *sine quâ non*, as a heavy weapon thus carried drags a man to pieces in no time; and there is always this advantage on horseback, that even if the first shot be badly placed, the sportsman can quickly come up with his game and deliver another.

For big-game shooting on foot in dense bush the larger the bore the better, I believe; small bores in such cases give great disappointment. So that no matter how much reliance a man

may place in his hard-hitting small-bores, if big-game be sought a large-bore rifle should form part of his battery.

One occasionally hears of repeating-arms being suggested as useful additions to a battery; but let the intending sportsman take the advice of *one who has used them*, and let them severely alone. They are good enough for what they were intended—Indian border warfare—but as weapons to be used upon dangerous game, they are useless toys, never in balance, and usually possessing an abnormally high trajectory. One may well be forgiven, also, for considering them unsportsmanlike. Pumping lead into an animal from a hand-mitrailleuse is scarcely in accordance with one's ideas of fair sport.

There is one point which suggests itself as worthy of passing remark. The expression very often crops up, "an efficient all-round rifle," and it seems to me that the description is a fatally misleading one. In common with a good many others that I know of, I have had a pretty severe attack of "all-round-rifle" fever, and experience in the field was the doctor that cured me: he is a splendid practitioner, and the only really qualified one,—theory is a fraudulent quack. I hold strongly to the opinion that such a rifle cannot exist; therefore, to base one's arguments on that which is non-existent is obviously erroneous. The term "all-round rifle" for use in a big-game country, I take to mean a weapon which can be used indiscriminately with efficiency on all game that may show itself, and thus enable a man who can only afford limited battery, or who has perhaps no means at his disposal of carrying more than one weapon, to do, or attempt to do, execution amongst thick-skinned animals, the larger carnivoræ, and antelopes alike,—a rifle, in fact, which shall be as efficient amongst springbuck, blesbuck, oribi, and rhébuck of the hill-country, as amongst the sable, roan, and other large antelopes of the bush-veldt; as effective upon the tough large-boned rhinoceros, buffalo, and giraffe as upon the thin-skinned but more dangerous carnivoræ. Surely, to any one who knows what big-game shooting is, such an idea cannot commend itself. That the sportsman in all lands should have a handy rifle to be his constant companion I quite admit, but entirely deny that he can use it as an all-round weapon. I am aware that I have drawn attention to the efficiency of a .461 Metford when used upon rhino, buffalo,

&c., but it was only in order to show what a powerful weapon such can be made, not as advising the constant use of such on the biggest game.

For preserving animal trophies in the hunting-veldt, a very simple outfit of tools and preservatives is required. With a good pocket-knife carrying one stout 4-inch blade and one or two smaller ones, the largest and the smallest animals can be operated upon efficiently. A good Turkey-stone, and three pairs of stoutly made scissors—large, medium, and small—are very necessary, and will come into use as frequently as the knife.

If it is desired to save the head trophies alone of the *Felidæ*, jackals, hyænas, and hunting-dogs, the skin of the head must not be cut at all, save to sever the neck from the rest of the carcass. By careful manipulation the skin can then be pulled clean over the head towards the nose, severing the ears at their bases. All details of this kind can readily be learned by a perusal of Montagu Browne's excellent work, 'Practical Taxidermy,'—the very best book of its kind ever written for amateurs, as it seeks to instruct and simplify, not to bewilder the tyro, as most others do. Be careful always to skin the ears to their tips. This can best be done by pushing the handle of a scalpel, or any flat bone or horn instrument, up towards the tips, and carefully removing all fleshy matter around the base. Cut away as much of the cartilaginous matter around the nostrils as possible, and the flesh between the mucous membrane and outer skin of the lips. Always retain the mucous membrane of the eyes. The greatest care must be exercised over both ears and eyes, and even then a slip will occur sometimes. Let your object be to remove as far as possible all fleshy matter from the head-skin, but remember that it is better to cut too little than too much. When the head-skin is fleshed and cleaned it must be thoroughly rubbed on both sides with a mixture of burnt alum and saltpetre, of which a good supply should always be taken. The proportion of each to the other is 1 lb. of burnt alum to $\frac{1}{4}$ lb. of saltpetre; mix it into a thick paste with water, and put it on freely with a large brush. It is always well to paint the eyes, nose, lips, and inside of ears with this preservative, mixed with a few drops of carbolic acid, before starting to skin the head, and as it counteracts all tendency in the hair to slip. There are any number of preservative pre-

parations before the public, but I would strongly advise any one not to waste money upon them. They may be good, but better they cannot be than the simple preparation I have mentioned, and the knowledge of which I also owe to that useful book. Whether the head be that of the antelope, of the Felidæ, buffalo, or giraffe, it is equally effective, and is as cheap as effective. Hang the head-skin up to dry in an airy spot, with the fur inside. But in tropical and sub-tropical districts I strongly recommend that they be carefully turned back to their natural position, so that the fur or hair is outside. This should be done just as they commence to get dry, but before getting too hard. It enables the collector to give them the necessary turpentine bath occasionally—an *absolute necessity* if the skins are to be preserved from the ravages of insects. Horned heads should be severed in like manner from the body, always *leaving plenty of neck*. The most common mistake made, and perhaps the most serious one, is that of cutting off the neck too short. If the skin can be taken off just before the shoulders, so much the better—the underpart of the throat especially requiring to be long. With horned heads the back of the neck must be skinned up—if there is any mane, run the knife along close to it—till between and a little behind the bases of the horns: make branch cuts towards these, and proceed exactly as described in the book above referred to. Zebra and giraffe must also be cut up the back of the skull, and not underneath the jaw.

I have never yet succeeded in successfully skinning the “horns” of giraffe: it is a most difficult task. I have always skinned up to the bases as far as possible, and then sawn the horns from the skull. A hole can be bored with a gimlet down each horn from the top, and carbolic acid dropped in. The whole must be thoroughly smeared inside and out with the alum and saltpetre preservative. If one has stowage room, it is better not to saw the skulls of horned heads down the centre, as it tends to seriously weaken them, but where space is limited it must be done. The wart-hog or *vlak-vark* is one of the most difficult animals to operate upon, and I have never yet done one successfully without cutting it under the throat to about the commencement of the chin: this greatly assists in getting the skin clear of the tusks.

Boil all skulls carefully (recollect that *care* must be exercised in all matters pertaining to the preservation of trophies—care, patience, and watchfulness), and as soon as the lower jaw will come away, take it out and scrape it: if boiled too long it is damaged. I have always found a large riveted galvanised iron bucket useful—nay, invaluable—for cleaning heads. When the skulls are scraped clean, and the brain-matter removed, if a horned head, the horns must be pulled off from their bony cores (good employment for a lazy native), washed inside with hot water, and the core cleaned and painted with carbolic solution, then dried. The cores can be sawn off so as to leave 4 or 5 inches of the butt upon which to replace the horns. This can be done when all is dry and free from smell. The horns of wildebeeste and waterbuck are very hard to get off their cores, but one can always set some of the idlers about a camp to do that.

Wrap carefully in *dry* grass when packing, and never place skulls in the same part of the waggon—or even in the same waggon, if it can be avoided—as the head-skins.

Constantly overhaul for beetles—*Dermestes lardarius* is now a “by-word and a reproach”—and soak freely with turpentine, of which several gallons should be carried.

Ticket all specimens with a number, having reference to a similar number in the “note-book,” wherein dimensions and other remarks will be accurately noted.

If trophies are to be stored for any length of time, hang in as light a place as possible, as if put away into dark corners they will inevitably be found out by the beetles sooner or later.

Six-inch “French nails” are very handy for pegging out skins that are required for mounting; they do not tear so much as pegs.

As I know but little about the proper treatment of bird-skins, I must again refer the amateur to the *vade-mecum* already quoted.

Of waggon-fittings, camp and personal requisites, it is needless to say anything: the intending sportsman will be able to ascertain what his needs are from those on the spot, before trekking into the game country; besides which, many books already published give full details upon all such matters.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX I.

THE FAUNA OF THE KAHLAMBA-LIBOMBO HUNTING-VELDT.

IN the compilation of the following list of the Mammal-Fauna of the Kahlamba-Libombo veldt, I have adopted the classification of Professors Flower and Lydekker, as set forth in their excellent work, 'Mammals, Living and Extinct.'

MANIS (*Manis temmincki*). *Ijzer-magauw* of the Boers; *Kwara* of the Basuto.—Found throughout the district, but nowhere numerous, and but seldom seen. The largest specimen I have ever seen would have measured not far short of 5 feet, including a tail of at least 3 feet. The natives say they can climb trees. The flesh is eaten by the Basuto and Tonga natives.

ANT-BEAR (*Orycteropus afer*). *Aard-vark* (Earth-Pig) of the Boers; *Isambane* of the Swazis and Zulus; *Takadu* of the Basuto.—Found everywhere throughout the terrace country amongst the foothills and in the bush-veldt; but, being nocturnal in their habits, are seldom seen, though in places whole acres of ground are riddled with their burrows. These burrows are the most dangerous obstacles which a horseman, galloping in pursuit of game, meets with in the Low Country. They are powerful creatures, and make short work of the hardest ant-heaps; the forepaws being armed with most formidable hoof-like claws, with which they burrow rapidly, sinking themselves out of sight in a few moments. Their peculiarly shaped spoor can often be seen on newly burnt ground in the early mornings. Their tails are quite serious weapons, and they are said to use them for thumping the ground in the vicinity of the ant-nests, causing a panic within, of

which the ant-bear proceeds to take advantage. The only one I ever shot measured 4 feet 8 inches.

HIPPOPOTAMUS (*Hippopotamus amphibius*). *Zee-koe* (Sea-cow) of the Boers; *Imvubu* of the Swazis; *Ikubu* of the Basuto.—Found in most of the principal rivers, though no longer plentiful, having been persistently hunted. They are now protected by law. They travel great distances overland, during the night, from one river to another. I believe that the longest period of time for which they can remain submerged without coming to the surface to breathe, either in open water or amongst the herbage on the river-bank, is twelve minutes. The flesh is eagerly sought after by the Boers for making into bacon—*zee-koe spek*. The largest pair of sea-cow tusks (curved) I ever secured were those of a bull shot by me on the Zambesi in 1894. They measured 2 feet 7½ inches and 2 feet 7 inches respectively. The straight tusks (incisors) of this beast were 19 inches in length.

BUSH-PIG (*Potamochoerus africanus*). *Bosch-vark* of the Boers; *Ingulubi* of the Swazis and Zulus.—Numerous throughout the broken country in the neighbourhood of the mountain-range, wherever dense cover and water exist; and especially plentiful in the deep kloofs amongst the foothills. I have never seen one in the Low Country proper, where they must be exceedingly rare; but I heard of one being observed near the Libombo in 1893. They lie up during the day in any thick cover or long grass, moving abroad at sundown. They are principally vegetable-feeders, eating roots and wild fruits; but occasionally they indulge in a meat diet, as I have known five of them almost devour the carcass of a bushbuck ram I had wounded and lost, and from the remains of which they were driven off by a leopard. They do incalculable damage to the natives' crops, as they often go about in formidable troops of from fifteen to twenty in number, but usually in smaller bands of from eight to ten. They have from six to eight young ones at a litter. Their bodies are covered with stiff bristly hairs, and a heavy mane of a more bristly nature runs from the neck along the dorsal line. From the protuberances upon the cheeks stiff, coarse, white bristles stand out. Their ears are slightly tufted, much less so than those of their congener the West Afri-

can river-hog (*P. penicillatus*); colour variable, sometimes either white, brown, black, or grey, occasionally mottled. The young are brown, with yellow stripes. A large full-grown boar will stand 30 or 31 inches at the shoulders—28 inches is a fair average—the sows 25 to 26 inches. The largest tusches I ever secured measured $4\frac{3}{4}$ inches outside the jaw. I have never seen them take to earth even when closely pursued. When running, the tail is depressed. They are savage plucky creatures, and fight with fierce determination to the death. Their flesh is coarse, yet generally eaten, but they never become very fat.

WART-HOG (*Phacochoerus africanus*). *Vlak-vark* of the Boers; *Indaigazana* of the Swazis and Zulus; *Ikulubi* of the Basuto.—Common throughout the Low Country, especially in thin low bush, and amongst rough dongas. I have never seen these animals in troops like *Potamochoerus africanus*—they are usually met with in pairs, or a family party of an old sow and seven or eight little ones. They are frequently found in company with wildebeeste and Bur-chell's zebra. They burrow in the ground, and when going to earth, enter stern first. Owing to the large wart-like excrescences on the head and the shortness of the neck, they cannot turn round—with the head at right angles to the plane of the body—to look at anything behind them without turning the body as well; so when desirous of seeing anything coming along behind them, they raise their snouts in the air and look back over their shoulders. They carry their tails erect when running, a feat which they learn when quite little things. I have never seen more than four young ones running with the mother. A boar's tusks will average, upper 8 inches, lower 6 inches, outside the jaw, though I have seen them considerably over that size. The largest I ever saw measured 15 inches, and nearly met over the snout. The boar stands about 27 to 29 inches at the shoulder, slightly less than a boar of *Potamochoerus africanus*; but I have seen far heavier animals amongst the latter. The flesh of the young wart-hog is very tasty. They run with great speed, but would give no opportunity for using a spear, as they take to earth first chance. They sometimes fight hard, and can give severe wounds with their lower tusches, but for gameness and pluck are not to be compared with the bush-pig.

GIRAFFE (*Giraffa camelopardalis*). *Kameel* of the Boers; *Ihuhla* of the Swazis; *Indhlulamiti* (that which surpasses the trees) of the Zulus; *Tuthla* of the Basuto.—More or less numerous throughout the bush-veldt east of long. $31^{\circ} 30'$; in troops of from five or ten to thirty in number. An average bull measures 17 feet 6 inches in total height, a cow 16 feet. The hide is in great demand for waggon-whips. They are now protected by law in this district.

SASSABY (*Damaliscus lunatus*). *Bastard Hartebeeste* of the Boers; *'Mzansi* of the Swazis; *Igalowana* of the Basuto.—Found in small herds of eight or ten throughout the Low Country, frequently in company with Burchell's zebra and wildebeeste. They are usually considered the fastest and toughest of the antelopes, but the sable and wildebeeste run them very closely in respect of both these qualities. This antelope is more partial to open plains than to bush country, but having now been driven back from the open country, it is commonly found in the bush about the Swinya, Nguanetsi, and Timbabati rivers. The young are of a bright yellowish red, and run with wonderful speed. When the young grass springs up these animals become very fat, but the fat, like that of the waterbuck, is not pleasant eating, as it quickly becomes cold and clogs in the mouth. The longest pair of bull-horns I have recorded is 15 inches, 8 inches girth at the base; of cow-horns $13\frac{1}{2}$ inches, but they are more slightly made. Their height at the shoulder is 3 feet 10 inches to 4 feet.

BRINDLED GNU (*Connochætes taurina*). *Blauw-Wildebeeste* of the Boers; *Inkongone* of the Swazis and Zulus; *Ikokoni* of the Basuto.—Everywhere common, in troops varying from eight or ten to as many as a hundred members, and I have seen at least double this number in a troop. They are usually found in the company of other game—giraffe, Burchell's zebra, or ostriches; sometimes single bulls run with a troop of other antelope, and invariably make the running in such cases. They drink twice a-day—night and morning—and are very partial to wallowing in the mud. A good pair of bull horns will measure 26 inches between the inside bends. I do not think they ever attain to the

size of those reported from the Mashuna country. Wildebeeste are, in my opinion, the toughest of the antelopes, and are very fleet and enduring. The wildebeeste's tail is long, and reaches to the animal's hocks. Shoulder height of bulls, 4 feet; cows, 3 feet 9 inches.

DUIKER (*Cephalophus grimmi*). *Duiker* (Diver) of the Boers; *Impunzi* of the Swazis and Zulus; *Iputi* of the Basuto.—Abundant everywhere throughout the district. They are found in very dry stretches of country, being almost independent of water. The leaves of shrubs and wild berries and fruit form an important item in their diet; in fact, in the broken country where the shrubs are not thorny, they eat more of such leaves than of grass. In colour they are extremely variable, even in the same district, being sometimes pale silvery grey, dark grey, grey brown, and at times even showing a decided green or yellow tinge. Some duikers have very long, rough, dark coats, with very little, if any, white on the under-parts, and the head of a less rufous tint than in the paler variety; these are most frequent in the near vicinity of deep kloofs and heavy cover. An albino duiker was shot lately by Mr Glynn amongst the foothills, and in 1890 I shot a specimen—a ram—with a broad white band over the back and shoulders. The longest pair of duiker-horns I ever saw measured 6 inches, the largest I ever secured being 5 inches; but 4 inches is the average. The ewes are usually hornless, but I have shot one with horns 1 inch long, and have seen two other such. Shoulder height, 23 inches; croup, 24 inches.

RED DUIKER (*Cephalophus natalensis*). *Rooi-bosch-bokje* (Little Red Bushbuck) of the Boers; *'Msumbi* of the Swazis; *'Mkumbi* of the Zulus; *Isikupu* of the Basuto.—This pretty little antelope is usually called by its native name, *'msumbi*, in these parts; it has also been styled the red bushbuck, which is obviously erroneous. It is an exceedingly common little animal in this district, being found in large numbers on the terrace-lands and among the lower hills—in fact, wherever there is plenty of thick cover and water, and in all the densest kloofs. In the thorn-country it is rare: I have only heard of it having been once

observed there. It is a solitary, wary little creature, and wonderfully expert at threading its way through the thorny tangle of the kloofs, while its skill in dodging hunters and dogs is inimitable. Its food consists almost entirely of the leaves of aromatic shrubs and bushes, wild fruit and berries. The horns rise far back on the frontals, are sharp and straight, deeply ringed at the base, and almost completely hidden in the thick tuft of hair at their bases. The hide is very tough, and similar to that of the bushbuck in its nature. The call of this buck, very seldom heard, is a sharp whistle; but when caught by dogs its cry is deep and rough, like that of a bushbuck, and not a hare-like squeal, as is that of the grey duiker. The flesh is tasty, and far superior to that of the grey duiker. The longest pair of ram's horns I ever secured were $3\frac{1}{8}$ inches, full, and of ewe's horns (for both sexes are horned), $2\frac{3}{4}$. I have twice, however, shot ewes without horns. Shoulder height, 19 to 20 inches.

ORIBI (*Ourebia scoparia*). *Oribi* and *Oribikje* of the Boers; *Iula* of the Swazis and Zulus; *Pulukudukamani* of the Basuto. —Once common all over the terrace-lands and throughout the mountain-range, but has now been nearly exterminated. It is also found in places amongst the foothills, where there are open grass-flats, especially near the White Water, a southern tributary of the Sabi river. I have never observed it down in the thorn-country. It is particularly partial to high, open, grass-ridges, lying about in the long patches of grass or bracken on the hill-sides, or amongst the stones and boulders that everywhere crop to the surface. They keep in pairs, though occasionally four or five will be found together: these will, however, pair off on being disturbed. Their leaping powers are great, and it is a pretty sight to see them bounding off through the long grass in front of dogs. Only an exceptionally good dog in these parts can fairly run one down. A full-grown ram stands 26 inches at the shoulders. The horns rise straight from the head, are from 4 to 5 inches in length, and slightly ringed at the base. The ewes are hornless. The flesh is very good eating.

STEINBUCK (*Raphicercus campestris*). *Steinbok* (Stonebuck) of the Boers; *Ingaina* of the Swazis; *Ipulupudi* of the Basuto.—

Common all over the lower flats in open bush-country. Seldom more than a pair are seen together. They lie very close, then spring up and go away at a great pace; but frequently standing once to look round, thus offering an easy shot if taken in time. When running, they are exceedingly difficult to knock over with a bullet; but a sharp whistle will often cause them to stand. They are dainty little things, and amongst the most graceful of all the antelopes, their eyes being especially beautiful and lustrous. A ram stands 23 inches at the shoulder. The longest horns I have ever seen were $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches. The ewes are hornless. Their flesh forms a very desirable addition to a hunter's larder in the Low Country.

GRYS-STEINBUCK (*Raphicerus melanotis*). *Grys-bok* of the Boers; *Isikupi* of the Basuto.—An exceedingly rare antelope. I have seen very few shot in the district. They are not uncommon on the Limpopo, and I have shot them on the Makutsi and Letaba rivers. They frequent stony country, and are particularly partial to scrub patches at the bases of detached kopjes. Their shoulder height is 22 inches.

KLIPSPRINGER (*Oreotragus saltator*). *Klipbok* (Rockbuck) or *Klipspringer* (Rock-springer) of the Boers; *Ligoka* of the Swazis; *Ikumi* of the Basuto.—Numerous amongst the krantzes of the foothills, and wherever, in the Low Country, small stony kopjes rise from the flats. They are wonderfully active little things amongst the rocks, but seldom attempt to run any distance on level ground, where they would easily be overtaken. The hairs on the body are of a bristly nature, each one being hollow, lying very thickly and closely, but, owing to their nature, must be cool and light. They are exceedingly loosely set in the skin—a very slight blow serves to knock out a handful. Each hair is pale grey at the base, brown in the centre, and yellow at the tip, the combination giving a peculiar stippled appearance to the whole. The longest pair of ram's horns I ever secured measure 5 inches in length, but 4 inches is a good average. Females are hornless. I have occasionally seen this animal far away from stony hills running over the rocks and boulders strewn in the larger river-beds. The flesh ranks before that of

all the smaller antelopes as an article of diet. Shoulder height of the rams 23 inches, of the ewes 21 inches.

RHÉBUCK (*Pelea capreolus*). *Vaal-rhébok* of the Boers; *Iliza* of the Swazis; *Pshiatla* of the Basuto.—The Boers—in fact, colonists generally—always call this antelope the *vaal* (grey) *rhébok* to distinguish it from what they term the *rooi* (red) *rhébok*, but the latter in reality is not a rhé buck at all, but a form closely allied to the nagor or mountain reedbuck. The rhé buck is found throughout the mountain-ranges and near the stony krantzes bordering the terrace-lands; occasionally they are seen amongst the lower hills. They run in small troops of from ten to twelve in number. The fur is thick, close, and curly, and of a uniform grey colour. The flesh of this antelope is not in great favour as an article of diet, owing to the fact that at certain seasons of the year the animal is subject to the attacks of the larvæ of the bot-fly, which burrow under the skin and raise most unsightly-looking excrescences, which, to say the least, do not tempt the appetite. The flesh, however, though dry, is as good as that of most of the smaller antelopes, which is not saying very much, that of the klipspringer being decidedly the most tasty. A rhé buck ram stands 2 feet 7 inches at the shoulders. Horns straight, non-divergent, and placed just above the orbits. Average length 5 inches, but I have seen a pair of 11 inches. Females hornless. Their call, when alarmed, is a loud quick snort.

WATERBUCK (*Cobus ellipsiprymnus*). *Kring-gat* of the Boers; *Ipiva* of the Swazis and Zulus; *Ipiklwa* of the Basuto.—Perhaps the commonest antelope of the Low Country, being everywhere met with along the banks of rivers and streams, and in and about rough stony kopjes near to water. They can travel with great speed over terribly rough ground, though they appear to be, and are, heavily built animals. They are found in considerable troops, sometimes as many as forty running together. The bulls frequently form little herds by themselves, but the best animals will be found either solitary or with a troop of cows. The flesh is coarse and strong. The skin possesses some medicinal property. If young stock are troubled, as is sometimes the case in the dry season, with hard wart-like excrescences about the body,

a strip of waterbuck hide tied round the neck will effect a certain cure. I disbelieved this naturally when the Kafirs first told me of it, but have since tried it on my own cattle, and always successfully. A waterbuck bull stands 4 feet 3 inches at the withers. The average length of horns is 28 inches over the anterior curve; but I have seen a pair $34\frac{1}{2}$ inches shot by Mr H. T. Glynn, and have shot two pairs, each $33\frac{1}{2}$ inches—the one being 30 inches in a straight line from point to base, the other $28\frac{1}{2}$ inches. The horns vary in form considerably, some being particularly massive, others thin and slight. The cows are hornless; but I am told that last season a Boer shot a cow with horns over 12 inches in length. It was a Boer who informed me of this, and I have no reason to doubt the accuracy of his statement. North of the Zambesi it is very rare to get a pair of waterbuck horns of over 28 inches.

REEDBUCK (*Cervicapra arundinum*). *Rietbok* of the Boers; *Inhlango* of the Swazis; *'Mziki* of the Zulus; *Iklabu* of the Basuto.—Common everywhere on the low spurs and foothills, and thence throughout the Low Country, wherever there are open stretches of grass-land, and by the reed-margined banks of rivers and streams. They seem equally at home, however, in the long grass amongst low thorn-bushes or in open forest country. They were till lately very plentiful on the terrace-land, but have been shot off indiscriminately, rams and ewes alike, and now I fear that even the setting apart of a close season will not avail to preserve this beautiful antelope. They are easily shot as a rule, as they almost invariably stand after running a short distance, and thus seal their fate. They are, however, peculiarly tenacious of life, and will get away with fearful wounds. It has been stated that the reedbuck never takes to water, but this is altogether a mistake: they are expert swimmers, and when hard pressed or wounded will frequently avoid their pursuers by jumping into a river or deep "hole" of water, and sink themselves beneath the surface, only keeping the nostrils above water, hidden amongst the grass and aquatic plants growing on the water's edge. I have frequently lost reedbuck in this way. A full-grown reedbuck ram will stand slightly over 3 feet at the shoulder, and has a total length of 5 feet 6 inches to

6 feet. The horns, which vary very much in shape and "set," average 12 to 13 inches. I have shot one with $15\frac{1}{2}$ -inch horns, and three with 15-inch horns, one pair having a spread of $15\frac{3}{4}$ inches from tip to tip. The females are without horns. The cry of both sexes is a peculiarly sharp whistle. I do not agree with those who say that the flesh is unpalatable, for I consider a well-"larded" leg of reed buck a real delicacy, but *chacun à son goût!*

MOUNTAIN REEDBUCK or NAGOR (*Cervicapra lalandi*). *Rooi-rhebuck* of the Boers and Colonists generally; *Inhlang 'amatshe* (Rock Reed buck) of the Swazis and Zulus.—Only now found on the mountain-range, though I have seen them amongst the foothills and well down on the flats in the district lying between Sabi and Crocodile rivers. The hair is longer than that of *C. arundinum*, and of a warmer brown tint. They run in small troops of six or eight, and their cry of alarm is a sharp whistle like that of the larger reed buck. A ram stands 30 inches at the shoulder, and the horns are 8 to 9 inches in length.

IMPALA (*Æpyceros melampus*). *Rooibok* (Red buck) of the Boers; *Impala* of the Swazis and Zulus; *Pala* of the Basuto.—Very numerous throughout the Libombo hunting-veldt. Their range extends north and south through the district, but I have not observed them to the west of $31^{\circ} 30'$ E. long. In the dense *gwarra* thickets along the Sabi, and at the junction of Timbati and Oliphants rivers, they exist in incalculable numbers. They are most partial to thick bush along the river-banks and open forest country, but are never seen far from water. The troops vary greatly in the number of individuals—ten, twenty, thirty, fifty, or a hundred; and I have seen a herd of at least two hundred or more. The rams frequently form troops by themselves, the animals comprising it being of all ages; and at other times I have seen large troops of ewes without a single grown-up ram amongst them. During the rutting season the rams make a great noise throughout the night, constantly uttering a deep and very guttural bark. When impala start off in a certain direction upon being disturbed, and make up their minds

to go that way, they will not be turned by anything, but will pass almost within a horse's length of the danger that threatens them, merely increasing their speed and leaping through the air with a series of active bounds. Their brilliant colouring is a most pleasing feature in the landscape, the effects of light and shade upon their hides as they leap here and there amongst the trees being very striking. The ewes become very fat in the spring, and are excellent eating; the hair is peculiarly glossy, and the hide soft and pliable. I consider them the most tenacious of life of all the smaller antelopes. They are frequently troubled with bot-fly larvæ. The horns are lyrate and annulated; a good average pair is 1 foot 5 inches in a straight line from base to tip. I have shot a pair 20½ inches, and have seen a pair 21 inches. Height at the withers, 3 feet.

SABLE ANTELOPE (*Hippotragus niger*). *Zwaart-vit-pense* (Black-white-belly) of the Boers; *Impalampala* of the Swazis and Zulus; *Palahala* of the Basuto.—To the east of 31° 30' long., north and south through the district, this splendid antelope is decidedly scarce, though it appears again on the Libombo slopes; but to the west of that degree of longitude it is plentiful, and one of the commonest antelopes. Although partial to high ridges and open bush-country, it is frequently met with in some of the densest bush on the Timbabati, Swinya, Simana, and Nguanetsi rivers, as well as on the thorn-clad ridges across the Mehlahali. It is usually found in herds of eight or ten to thirty in number, each accompanied by one good bull. The best bulls, as a rule, are the solitary old fellows, living a secluded bachelor life away from the rest of their kind. They fight most savagely when brought to bay, and will soon make short work of a pack of dogs. The sable antelope possesses great speed and endurance, but, as a rule, gives good standing shots. The bull stands 4 feet 6 to 4 feet 8 inches at the shoulder, average height; cows 4 feet 2 inches. The horns, which rise from a prominent crest over the orbit, are recurved, massive, and deeply annulated. The longest pair I have ever seen were secured by a Boer on the Timbabati watershed, and measured 46 inches. The longest I ever shot measured 45½ inches, and the longest cow-horns 35½ inches. The average may be considered, for a good bull 40, cow

28 inches. Its flesh is palatable, more so than that of the closely allied roan antelope.

ROAN ANTELOPE (*Hippotragus equinus*). *Bastard Gemsbok* of the Boers; *'Mtagaisi* of Swazis and Zulus; *Klabakila* of the Basuto.—Now very rare in the district, though it was at one time common enough in the broken country amongst the foothills, on the upper Timbabati, and at the eastern end of the Rij Kopjes. There are still a few on the high stony ridges across the Mehlahali, and about Maripi's Berg and the Oliphants river, but nowhere in large numbers. I shot two very fine bulls in 1891, on the Nguanetsi, but they were wanderers. I have seen single bulls with troops of sable antelope. An average full-grown bull stands 4 feet 8 or 4 feet 9 inches at the withers. Average length of horns 2 feet 5 inches, of the cows 2 feet.

BUSHBUCK (*Tragelaphus sylvaticus*). *Bosch-bok* of the Boers; *Imbabala* (for both sexes) of the Swazis; *Inkonka* (ram), *Imbabala* (ewe) of the Zulus.—Not uncommon on the terrace-lands, and particularly plentiful amongst the kloofs of the foothills, wherever dense bush affords it the necessary cover. In the Low Country it is less common, but will be found sparingly along the courses of the streams and rivers. A variety or a modification of the existing local form is found on the Timbabati and Nguanetsi rivers, in which the stripes and spots are somewhat more numerous and clearly defined, and the ground-colour of a warmer tint. Their food consists almost entirely of the leaves of shrubs and trees, and of wild fruit in the season. They are strong swimmers. Shoulder height 2 feet 10 inches to 3 feet, total length 5 feet. I have shot one with horns 16 inches, and several of 15 inches; but the average may be considered 13 inches, or even less. Old rams are frequently found with their horns worn down to mere stumps. The females are hornless. They are good eating: the flesh appears to me to have a distinct aromatic flavour, probably caused from its fragrant vegetable diet.

KOODOO (*Strepsiceros kudu*). *Koodoo* of the Boers; *Itshononono* of the Swazis and Zulus; *Itolo* of the Basuto.—Found throughout the Low Country, from the foothills to the Libombo,

in small herds of four or five to ten in number. A troop consisting entirely of bulls, old and young, is not uncommon. They are partial to rough stony hills covered with dense bush, but are equally plentiful along the banks of the streams and rivers of the Low Country, wherever the bush is thick enough to afford them cover. The leaves and young shoots of many astringent shrubs and trees, as well as wild fruit (they are particularly fond of the acid '*mganu*'), form an important item in their food. As a rule the bulls, though their powers of leaping are enormous, run neither fast nor far; but individuals differ, and I have more than once been "left in the lurch" by a good koodoo bull. The cows, on the contrary, run with great speed and endurance. An average bull will stand 4 feet 9 or 10 inches at the shoulder; a cow 4 feet 6 inches. Their flesh is quite equal to that of other antelopes.

ELAND (*Oreos canna*). *Eland* of the Boers; *Impofu* of the Swazis and Zulus; *Pofu* of the Basuto.—This, the largest of antelopes, can no longer be reckoned amongst the game of this district, where once it was plentiful. A few individuals still remain, but they are stringently protected by law. The average shoulder height of a bull is 5 feet 6 inches.

BUFFALO (*Bos caffer*). *Buffel* of the Boers; *Inyati* of Swazis and Zulus; *Nari* of the Basuto.—Now almost extinct, except in the dense, heavily-wooded kloofs of the foothills. In 1885 they were fairly numerous along the Oliphants and Timbabati rivers, and as late as 1890 I saw a few on the Swinya, and wounded a very fine bull: my horse bolted, however, so I did not secure him, but he was found dead by another hunting-party. The average width of the horns inside the bend at the widest part is about 35 inches. A good bull stands 4 feet 10 inches at the shoulder; one monster I shot on the Zambesi taped 5 feet, full.

BURCHELL'S ZEBRA (*Equus burchelli*). *Quagga* of the Boers; *Idube* of the Swazis and Zulus; *Makwa* of the Basuto.—Plentiful throughout the Low Country east of long. 31°, and are seen as frequently in thick thorn-bush as on the more open ridges. They herd together in troops of from ten to sixty individuals,

though upon occasions I have seen far more together. They are usually in company with other game—giraffe, wildebeeste, sassy, or ostriches. In the same troop individuals will show very great variation in their markings, the typical animals striped only to the hocks being far less frequently observed than the aberrant form striped to the hoofs. They stand 13 hands at the withers.

BLACK RHINOCEROS (*Rhinoceros bicornis*). *Rhenoster* of the Boers; *Upejana* of the Swazis and Zulus; *Upelepe* of the Basuto.—Now only to be found in the dense bush on the Libombo slopes, and here and there along the Lower Sabi. A few years ago it was not uncommon to the south of the Sabi and amongst the stony hills toward the Krokodile Poort. I believe the last existing specimen in the bush country to the west of the Libombo and north of the Sabi was shot on the Manunga river, close to my old "Rhino camp," in 1891. With the exception of perhaps three or four individuals still lingering in the Matamiri bush to the south of the Sabi, the square-mouthed rhinoceros (*R. simus*) is also extinct in this district.

HYRAX (*Hyrax capensis*). *Klip-das* of the Boers; *Rock-rabbit* of colonists generally; *Imbila* of the Swazis and Zulus; *Ipila* of the Basuto.—Plentiful everywhere along the mountain-ranges and in the kloofs. The flesh is eaten by the natives, but is coarse and strong.

GROUND-PIG (*Aulacodus swindernianus*). *Riet-muis* (Reed-mouse) of the Boers; *Ivondwe* of the Swazis and Zulus; *Ikwilira* of the Basuto.—Common throughout along the banks of streams and in the kloof. Much amusement can be obtained by hunting them with dogs. The flesh is white and of good flavour, being particularly tasty if boiled and eaten cold.

PORCUPINE (*Hystrix cristata*). *Ijzer-vark* of the Boers; *Injelwane* and *Inungu* of Swazis and Zulus; *Nunku* of the Basuto.—Plentiful everywhere. They do much damage amongst the pumpkin and sweet-potato plantations of the natives, and also amongst one's favourite dogs if they chance to be run into.

HARE (*Lepus capensis*). *Kol-haas* of the Boers; *Mvundhla* of the Swazis and Zulus; *Mukla* of the Basuto.—Plentiful everywhere in open country and thin thorn-bush.

HARE (*Lepus saxatilis*). *Rooi-haas* of the Boers; *Nogwaja* or *Intenetscha* of the Swazis and Zulus; *Ikloli* of the Basuto.—Only found amongst the rocks and krantzes of the foothills and mountain-range.

LION (*Felis leo*). *Leeuw* of the Boers; *Ingonyama*, *Ibubesi*, and *Imbubi* of the Swazis and Zulus; *Tau* of the Basuto.—Common throughout the Low Country, as well on the open grass-ridges with scanty patches of bush, as amongst stony kopjes and the heavily-wooded banks of rivers and streams. Particularly plentiful near the junction of the Timbabati and Oliphants rivers, the Malau, Vimbangwenya, and Lower Sabi. Usually seen three or four together, but I have noticed ten, and once twelve, in a troop. Their principal food is impala and Burchell's zebra. Lions with a full dark-brown mane are the most common; a really black mane is rare. Maneless lions are not unfrequently encountered. During the summer months they come up close to the foothills, following the game as it treks towards the new "burns." The average height of a full-grown male lion is 3 feet 5 or 6 inches, over-all length 9 feet to 9 feet 2 inches; of a lioness, height 3 feet, over-all length 8 feet to 8 feet 5 inches.

LEOPARD (*Felis pardus*). *Tijger* of the Boers; *Ingwe* of the Swazis and Zulus; *Inkwi* of the Basuto.—More or less numerous throughout the district; in the more broken country they are plentiful amongst the dense kloofs and rocky krantzes, and these are usually of a darker ground-colour with more irregular markings than those of the bush-veldt, though intermediate forms both as to length and coloration are as plentiful as the more clearly defined types. In the Low Country, leopards frequent the dense cover and palmite jungles along the river-banks, and are very common in the neighbourhood of low, stony kopjes rising from the flats near to water. In the inhabited districts they prey as much upon young cattle, sheep, and goats belonging to the natives as upon game; but in the bush-veldt impala,

koodoo, and waterbuck are their favourite food. The Low-Country leopards climb trees less frequently than the hill leopards, and both occasionally place their kill in the branches. They are very wary, and most savage in attack. The average height of the hill leopard is 2 feet 3 or 2 feet 4 inches, length 6 feet 5 inches; of the bush leopard, height 2 feet 6 inches to 2 feet 7 inches, length 6 feet 9 or 10 inches to 7 feet.

SERVAL (*Felis serval*). *Tijger-kat* of the Boers; *Indhloti* of Swazis and Zulus; *Tlodi* of the Basuto.—Common throughout the district, especially along the banks of creeks and rivers in the Low Country. They are easily killed with the help of dogs, which quickly “tree” them. They feed upon birds, hares, ground-pigs, and the smaller rodents. They show very marked variation in colour, from a pale yellowish grey to dark tawny yellow—the black markings upon the latter being more numerous and distinct, and forming more continuous lines down the back. I have seen an unusually dark specimen of this animal—in the possession of a native—almost deserving to be called a melanism, but the spots upon the skin were easily distinguishable. Length 3 feet 8 inches, height 20 inches.

WILD-CAT (*Felis caffra*). *Impaka* and *Imbodhla* of the Swazis and Zulus.—These are two fairly well-marked varieties of *Felis caffra*. The *impaka*, very variable in coloration, but usually of a more or less dark shade of grey, with frequently a warm brown tint, underparts very light, soles of the feet and tip of tail black; and with irregular and indistinct brindlings upon the body, which are darker and disposed more in rings on the lower limbs: the tail is long for a wild-cat. The *imbodhla* is longer in the body, and has a shorter tail; of a more decidedly tawny colour, with irregular brindlings upon the body, but few on the lower limbs: soles of the feet not so decidedly black as in the *impaka*. The latter is more arboreal in its habits than the *imbodhla*. They both feed upon small rodents and birds, and are about the size of a well-grown domestic cat. The *imbodhla* is decidedly rare. I have only seen two living specimens, one of which I shot on the Nguanetsi river as it was in the act

of stalking some francolin on the edge of a strip of bush. This specimen was 2 feet 7 inches in length.

CHAUS-CAT (*Felis chaus*). *Bosch-kat* of the Boers; *Imbodhla* of the Swazis.—This cat is somewhat larger than *F. caffra*, but is very generally confounded with it by Boers and natives. The most noticeable difference between the two animals is the colour of the fur, which in *F. chaus* is not only longer and coarser, but of a paler grey with a strong yellow tint, and very seldom brindled; the lower limbs and tail, however, are ringed, the latter black-tipped as in *F. caffra*, but much shorter. There is much similarity in habits and general characteristics between the two species, but *F. chaus* is far less seldom seen in trees.

CHEETA (*Cynaelurus jubatus*). *Luipard* of the Boers; *Ihlose* of the Swazis and Zulus; *Sigakaka* of the Basuto.—More or less numerous throughout the district, but nowhere found in very dense bush. They are usually seen in couples, but I have observed bands of from six to eight in number. They prey upon the smaller antelopes and koodoo—at least I have several times known them kill koodoo cows; but it is possible a big bull would be one too many for them, unless a number combined for the attack. In the inhabited districts they kill goats and young cattle. They are far less nocturnal in their habits than leopards, and in cool or wet weather move abroad at all hours. They are very swift, and a good horse cannot come near them in bush-country. The young ones make a peculiar whistling sound when alarmed in cover, but the full-grown ones jump away with deep grunts, so like the sounds produced by a leopard that I have more than once mistaken them. The leopard, however, rarely bounds noisily away like the cheeta, but creeps off quietly, unless disturbed at very close quarters. The average height of a full-grown male cheeta is 2 feet 6 inches to 2 feet 8 inches, length $7\frac{1}{2}$ feet. In all animals that I have observed killed by cheetas, death has been caused by strangulation.

CIVET (*Viverra civetta*). *Civet-kat* of the Boers; *Mpicamadhloti* (that which puzzles the "spirits"—a reference to its secretive

habits) of the Swazis; *Lisisi* of the Basuto.—Very seldom seen, but has been occasionally killed by my dogs in the kloofs and in the Low Country, on the banks of streams. Hair rough, an erectile mane along the back, neck with a deep black circlet, feet black. They fight hard when tackled by dogs.

GENET (*Genetta vulgaris*). *Insimba* of the Swazis and Zulus; *Tshipa* of the Basuto.—Three varieties are found, probably *G. vulgaris*, *G. tigrina*, and *G. pardalis*. *G. tigrina* is the commonest in this district; *G. pardalis*, with very yellow fur, is the rarest. They are very rapid in their motions, excellent tree-climbers, and easily tamed.

ICHNEUMON (*Herpestes*). Two varieties are commonly found—probably *H. caffer*, the *Mvunti* of the Swazis; and another species, called by the natives *Mhlangala*. *Helogale parvula* is met with, also *Cynictis pencillata*, and another closely allied form, the *Injindana* of the natives.

AARD-WOLF (*Proteles cristatus*). *Aard-wolf* (Earth-wolf) of the Boers; *Isingci* of the Swazis; *Tuku* of the Basuto.—Found upon the terrace-lands only, but being purely nocturnal in its habits, is seldom seen. The body is covered with a woolly undercoating, which is hidden, however, beneath the long rough hairs of the body. An erectile mane along the back, tail bushy. Feeds on ants and decayed animal matter. They burrow in holes in the ground.

SPOTTED HYÆNA (*Hyæna crocuta*). *Wolf* of the Boers; *Impisi* of the Swazis and Zulus; *Kwiri* of the Basuto.—Very common, being frequently seen amongst the foothills, and everywhere numerous throughout the Low Country. They are seen singly, in pairs, or in troops of eight and ten. During the day they lie up in dry gullies or in thick patches of bush or stony kopjes, moving abroad at sundown. They may often be seen in the evening moving along with their heads turned up, as though desirous of studying the weather. The natives say they are watching for the vultures, as a guide to where they can expect a supper. They are most powerful creatures, and peculiarly cun-

ning. Spring-guns require to be most artfully set to kill them. I have repeatedly known them take away the meat from the very muzzle without being injured. Their plan usually is to break through the *scherm* and abstract the meat from behind. The combined cunning and strength they display in getting out of powerful "tiger-traps" is marvellous: they will twist up the bait-plate with their teeth, as if it were sheet-tin instead of iron—in fact, I have seen such wonderful feats of strength and cunning performed by them that I should hesitate to relate them. On one occasion I shot a monster measuring 3 feet at the shoulders; but about 2 feet 7 or 2 feet 8 inches is a fair average height. Length, 6 feet to 6½ feet. I have never observed the brown hyæna in the district.

BLACK-BACKED JACKAL (*Canis mesomelas*); AFRICAN FOX (*C. variegatus*?); OTOCYON (*Otocyon megalotis*). *Yackhals*, generally, of the Boers. The natives call the *Otocyon* *Jakalas* (from the Boer word *jackhals*), and the Black-backed Jackal *Impungutshe*.—They are all common on the flats, and the *otocyon* is seen also on the terrace-lands. The African fox may be *Canis variegatus* or *C. chama*, but I am not sure; it is not so large as the *otocyon*, and less frequently seen.

HUNTING-DOG (*Lycaon pictus*). *Wilde-hond* of the Boers; 'Budaja of the Swazis; *Inkentshana* of the Zulus; *Matshabidi* of the Basuto.—Common from the lower terrace-lands to the Libombo. These dogs hunt in packs, by day or night, of from ten to twenty in number. They exhibit the greatest boldness in attack, and will frequently follow a solitary horseman for miles. What their object may be it is hard to say, as I have never known a case of a horseman being attacked; but they have attacked men on foot. Only a few months ago one of a pack of fifteen or sixteen took a duiker which I had shot almost from under my feet as I was about to pick it up, and I had to relinquish it to them to enable me to open fire on them, as their actions were unpleasantly demonstrative. Not until I had dropped four of their number on the spot did they make off, but I lost my buck. They are ravenous eaters, and will make a clean sweep of the largest antelope in a quarter of an hour. They stand 2 feet 3 or

.4 inches at the shoulders; length over all 4 feet 10 inches; tail 14 inches. They are most variable in colour, but the white brush to the tail is common to all.

OTTER (*Lutra capensis*). *Otter* of the Boers; *Intini* of the Swazis and Zulus; *Itini* of the Basuto.—Common in all the rivers and streams.

RATEL (*Mellivora ratel*). *Ratel* of the Boers; *Indundundwana* and *Insele* of the Swazis and Zulus; *Sisele* of the Basuto.—Common throughout the kloofs of the lower ranges. They are really dangerous animals to tackle, for they bite fiercely, and always aim at emasculating either man or dog. They burrow in holes amongst tree-roots, or live in hollow trees. The hair is usually rubbed off the back from going in and out of these holes. They are omnivorous, and are easily tamed.

GALAGO (*Galago maholi*). *Nacht-apje* of the Boers; *Ngwanang-waila* of the Basuto.—Common in all the dense kloofs: it is seldom seen, being purely nocturnal in its habits, but can be heard nightly just at dark calling loudly in the bush.

GRIVET MONKEY (*Cercopithecus griseo-viridis*) and VERVET MONKEY (*C. lalandi*). *Apje* (Ape) of the Boers; *Ingobiyana* of the Swazis; *Inkau* of the Zulus; *Inkalatshana* of the Basuto.—Common everywhere in the kloofs and bushes of the terrace-lands and lower ranges, but in the Low Country only along the banks of the larger rivers. I have not observed either variety to the east of 31° E. longitude, except on the banks of the Sabi and Oliphants rivers. They become inordinately fat, in which condition they are highly prized as an article of diet by the natives.

SAMANGO MONKEY (*Cercopithecus samango*). *'Simango* of the Swazis.—This most beautiful monkey is exceedingly rare in the district, its habitat being strictly confined to the densest forests of the lower ranges. It is consequently very seldom seen; but the natives, who value the skin highly, catch them frequently in very ingenious traps.

CHACMA BABOON (*Cynocephalus porcarius*). *Baviaan* of the Boers; *Imfena* of the Swazis and Zulus; *Tshweni* of the Basuto. —These apes exist in large numbers in the mountain-ranges and amongst the krantzes and rocky kloofs of the foothills. In the Low Country they are plentiful along the banks of all the larger rivers, where they live upon beetles, scorpions, land-crabs, roots, wild-fruit, and the gum which exudes in large quantities from the various species of acaciæ, and of which they devour an enormous amount. I remember a year or two ago shooting a very large old man baboon whose jaws were so glued together by this substance that he could neither open nor close his mouth. How he intended eventually to get rid of it is a mystery. These Low-Country baboons are far more hairy than those of the mountain districts, and I fancy usually attain a much larger size: one monster I shot on the Nguanetsi stood full 3 feet 9 inches in height. They are very plentiful amongst the Timbabati kopjes, and on the Libombo range. I think the baboons found along the mountain-ranges are more savage than those of the bush-veldt. There are very few dogs in this country, if any, that, single-handed, could overpower a full-grown male baboon.

With the Avifauna of the country I do not feel myself at all competent to deal, except in the most general way, so will confine myself to a few remarks upon the most conspicuous forms.

Of raptorial birds there would appear to be an almost endless number, though it is very possible that in many instances the numerous changes of plumage which occur during the life of a single individual will lead any but the most careful observer to suppose that more varieties exist than is actually the case.

Amongst the Vultures, the two most remarkable birds are the SOUTHERN LAELIMERGEYER (*Gypætos ossifragus*) and the BLACK VULTURE (*Otogyps auricularis*). The former magnificent bird, called by the Boers the *Lammervanger* or Lamb-catcher, is only found along the mountain-ranges, and is a daring and destructive bird. The largest specimen I ever shot measured 8 feet 5 inches from tip to tip of wings.

The BLACK or SOCIABLE VULTURE—one of the true vultures—called the *zwart aasvogel* by the Boers, inhabits the plains, and

is a magnificent bird in point of size, its outspread wings sometimes measuring 9 feet or $9\frac{1}{2}$ feet from tip to tip. It is far less common than the Fulvous or the Egyptian Vultures, and amongst the swarming masses of these birds which congregate round a carcass in the Low Country, there are seldom more than five or six black vultures.

The WHITE-HEADED VULTURE (*Vultur occipitalis*) is another bird which is always seen in the bush-veldt, but sparingly.

The FULVOUS VULTURE (*Gyps kolbi*) and the EGYPTIAN VULTURE (*Neophron percnopterus*) swarm in countless numbers. I have no doubt whatever but that vultures hunt by sight and not by scent; and if the carcass of an animal shot be thoroughly well covered up by branches and grass, it may rot to pieces before the vultures will find it. In such cases, however, it is necessary to cover up any blood-stains or pieces of entrails which may be near the spot, otherwise the vultures will find these out, and before long make their way to the carcass. If an animal falls in a patch of thick bush or cover, these birds appear quite incapable of finding it, no matter in how far advanced a state of decomposition it may be.

I have noticed five different eagles — the MARTIAL EAGLE (*Spizidætus bellicosus*), the AFRICAN FISH-EAGLE (*Halidætus vocifer*), the BATELEUR EAGLE (*Helotarsus ecaudatus*), the CROWNED HAWK-EAGLE, and another with the name of which I am unacquainted. It is a grand bird, jet black as to its body, with beak and legs crimson; it is not quite so large a bird as the Martial Eagle, but certainly belongs to the genus *Spizidætus*. It is an inhabitant of the plains, and, like the Bateleur Eagle, nests on the tops of the highest and most inaccessible thorn-trees. Only upon one occasion have I had an opportunity of examining one closely, when a friend of mine brought a splendid specimen down with a '360 Express. The Kafirs call this bird *Ingqulungqulu* and *Indhlazanyoni*, and look upon it as the king of birds.

There is also another handsome bird of small size, dark brown in colour, with white markings, breast and underparts white. I am not certain to which group of the great Falconine family it should be referred.

Kites, Buzzards, and Hawks abound in incredible numbers, but the task of describing them is beyond me.

The dignified SECRETARY BIRD (*Sagittarius secretarius*) is common on all the open plains of the terrace-country. When chased on horseback or by dogs it runs with wonderful speed, only using its wings as a last resource, and even then taking but a short flight before alighting and again making use of its long legs. There is a £50 penalty for shooting one of these birds. At the same time, useful as they are, there is no doubt that they kill large numbers of young game, particularly hares and partridges; but their persistent pursuit of snakes more than atones for their poaching propensities.

Many varieties of Owls are found. I have seen an EARED OWL on the lower ranges, and also a large EAGLE OWL (*Bubo capensis*).

Hornbills, Doves, Pigeons, Rollers (two varieties are common—*Coracias garrula* on the lower ranges, and *Coracias caudata* in the bush-veldt), Ibises (*Geronticus hagedash*), Widah-Finches (*Vidua principalis*—one of the Grosbeaks, a most handsome bird—its long tail-feathers, which are shed in the winter, being highly esteemed amongst the natives, who call the bird *Isakabula*), Weaver-birds, one of the prettiest being the omnipresent *Inhlokohlolo*,—all these abound; the GREEN-NECKED TOURACOU (*Corythaix chlorochlamys*)—the '*Gwalagwala*' of the natives—in all the kloofs; Shrikes, Woodpeckers, Bee-eaters, Sun-birds, and Kingfishers,—in fact the country teems with bird-life.

Two species of Crane are common to the terrace-lands, *Grus carunculata*, and the beautiful, dainty *Anthropoides paradisea*; and the STORK is a summer visitant. The Boers call this bird *Sprinkhaan-vogel* (Grasshopper or Locust-bird), in reference to this their very favourite article of diet.

In the Low Country, of course, the OSTRICH will first claim attention, and the bird is by no means rare, although of late years large numbers of them have been shot off. They are most numerous on the comparatively high open ridges to the east of the Mehlahali, and between that river and the Libombo range; also between the Nguanetsi and Timbabati rivers and the Libombo. But they are frequently found in densely wooded parts of the district, and are usually in company with Burchell's zebra, wildebeeste, or sassaby.

The well-known MARABOU STORK (*Leptoptilus crumeniferus*) is

common all over the central and eastern portions of the district, though seldom seen in large numbers. As a rule, from two or three to eight of these birds will be seen feasting on the putrid carcasses in company with the various kinds of vultures, and with their long powerful bill they certainly "rule the roast." They are wary birds, and require to be shot with a rook-rifle or a small Express. Their valuable feathers lie under the tail.

The little HONEY-GUIDE or HONEY-BIRD (*Indicator sparrmanni*) is found commonly throughout the district, from the lower ranges of the Kahlamba to the Libombo.

The RED-BILLED WEAVER-BIRD (*Textor erythrorhyncus*) and the BUFFALO or RHINOCEROS BIRD, as it is variously styled (*Buphaga africana*), are sure to attract attention everywhere throughout the Low Country, where they pursue their avocations upon the backs of trek-oxen and donkeys as assiduously as upon giraffe, rhinoceros, and buffalo. The native name for the former birds is *Mayanda*.

Two species of JACANA are found along the river-courses, and the wary GROUND-HORNBILLS (*Bucorax cafer*), with their incessant drumming cries, are common throughout the bush-country.

Of all the game-birds of the district the great KORI BUSTARD (*Otis kori*)—*Gom Paauw* of the Boers, in allusion to its partiality for the gum which exudes from the acaciæ, and *Isemi* of the natives—deservedly ranks first. This magnificent bird attains a length of over $4\frac{1}{2}$ feet, and I have seen one that weighed 40 lb. They are found throughout the bush-veldt, but are particularly wary, and seldom permit a nearer approach than 150 or 200 yards. I do not consider them such good eating as the lesser paauw, as they are usually too fat.

The LESSER BUSTARD, or PAAUW (*Eupodotis ludwigi*), is common to the terrace-lands. A good cock-bird measures nearly $3\frac{1}{2}$ feet, and averages about 12 to 14 lb. in weight.

The RUFOUS CRESTED BUSTARD (*Eupodotis ruficrista*) is a fine sporting bird, and is usually found at no great distance from the lower mountain-ranges. It is called locally the bush-korhaan. It rises suddenly and silently from long grass, but, after a short wavering flight, quickly settles again. It runs hard and far before dogs. It is a beautiful bird, with its crested head, mottled brown body plumage, and black wings. The under portions of

the feathers are of a rich, warm pink colour: as a table delicacy it scarcely has its equal.

The GREY KORHAAN (*Otis scolopacea*) is another handsome bird, but scarcely so large as the bush-korhaan. They run before dogs, but when they rise their flight is erratic and short, and they can easily be marked down and put up again. The lower part of the body-feathers is pink as in the bush-korhaan, but the tint is less rich.

The GUINEA-FOWL (*Numida nitrata*) is found throughout the Low Country, anywhere in the neighbourhood of water. They collect in enormous flocks, and in the vicinity of native gardens may always be found in large numbers. They are hard and swift runners, and will carry away a large charge of shot. If hard pressed they fly up into the trees and thus afford an easy mark. Many and many a time have I run myself almost off my legs in pursuit of these birds, for they are a most welcome addition to one's larder, and a very desirable change after the usual meat-fare of the hunting country. The best and most sporting weapon to use on these birds is a .295 rook-rifle or .360 Express, and excellent practice can be thus obtained. Their loud metallic cry is one of the sounds of the bush-veldt.

Three species of Francolin are common. The so-called "Pheasant"—SWAINSON'S FRANCOLIN (*Francolinus swainsoni*)—is common in the vicinity of dense cover and on the edges of kloofs and bushes, close to water. It is a large bird 15 or 16 inches in length, of a dark-brown colour, lighter underneath, with a bare patch of skin on the throat of a crimson hue, and a similarly coloured patch round the eyes.

Francolinus adspersus is, I think, also found in the district, but never far from water. They are but inferior table-birds.

The RED - WING PARTRIDGE (*Francolinus levaillanti*) is very common on grassy ridges and uplands, and in warm sheltered hollows. They are larger than an English partridge, but nothing like such good eating.

The little GREY-WING or COQUI FRANCOLIN (*Francolinus subtorquatus*) is an excellent and most beautiful game-bird, and is most frequently found in open bush-country. It lies particularly close before dogs.

Three species of Quail are found—the COMMON, HARLEQUIN,

and BUTTON QUAILS: the last is one of the bush quails, and is a very diminutive creature.

One if not two species of Snipe are to be met with. The bird I have examined appears in all respects similar to the Jack-snipe, except that there seems to be far less white about the plumage.

Wild-duck, Teal, and Widgeon are found in the rivers; also the SPUR-WINGED GOOSE (*Plectropterus gambensis*) and the beautiful EGYPTIAN GOOSE (*Chenalopex aegyptiaca*), but I cannot recommend either of the latter for the table.

APPENDIX II.

EXPLANATORY NOTES UPON THE FORMATION AND PRONUNCIATION
OF NATIVE WORDS IN THE SWAZI TONGUE.

It has been found impossible to exclude from the foregoing pages an occasional word or sentence in the native tongue, though I have endeavoured as far as possible to eliminate all but a very few. In doing so, I am not at all sure that the result is as happy a one as could be wished for, seeing that in so many cases the suggestive words and sentences spoken or shouted by one's enthusiastic hunting Kafirs add a real charm and additional excitement to the situation. Such words, however, as I have found it desirable to introduce are those of the Swazi dialect, with which I am acquainted. It differs in but a slight degree from that of the great Zulu nation—of which the Swazis are an offshoot—and is very generally understood, if not spoken, throughout the district.

Uniformity of dialect cannot be expected in these parts, as the natives inhabiting them comprise members of many broken tribes, each of which in ordinary conversation amongst themselves speak in the language of their own people, though well understanding that of their former conquerors. The 'Basuto, 'Bapidi, and 'Baroka use the Sesuto dialect; the 'Mapulana, 'Mahlangana, and 'Matonga converse in a very barbarous mixture of their three languages, or in one of either; whilst the 'Mambai, who are nearer akin to the Swazis, have also a language of their own. But with a fair knowledge of either the Zulu or Swazi dialect, one can make himself thoroughly well understood by any, except perhaps a few of the older generation, of the Basuto and their kindred tribes.

Twenty-six letters are employed in the formation of the Swazi language: of these, seventeen are consonants, five are vowels, three

are "clicks," and one, of unfrequent occurrence, is a harsh guttural.

The vowel sounds are as follows:—

<i>a</i> as <i>a</i>	in the English word	half.
<i>e</i> as <i>e</i>	"	" went.
<i>i</i> as <i>ie</i>	"	" fiend, or as <i>i</i> in French.
<i>o</i> as <i>o</i>	"	" hope.
<i>u</i> as <i>oo</i>	"	" loot.

The consonants *b, d, f, g, h, j, k, l, m, n, p, s, t, v, w, y*, and *z* have the same value as in English, though *g* is always sounded hard, as in *game*.

c, the dental "click" (*'mcapoti*, a marsh), *q*, the palatal "click" (*'mqulu*, a rolled bundle), and *x*, the lateral "click" (*nxapa*, to click or miss fire, as a gun), are sounds difficult to acquire except from the natives themselves. *r*, the harsh guttural, is sounded as the German *g*.

The nouns are divided into eight classes, two of which contain those which have no plural form. Each class is distinguished by its prefix, and each has a euphonic letter or letters, with the one exception of the second class plural; thus—

SINGULAR.			PLURAL.		EXAMPLES.
Class.	Prefix.	Euphonic letter.	Prefix.	Euphonic letter.	
1	U Umu Um	w	O Aba Aba	b	<i>Udade</i> , sister; <i>odade</i> , sisters. <i>Umntu</i> , person; <i>abantu</i> , persons. <i>Umfati</i> , wife; <i>abafati</i> , wives.
2	Ili I	l	Ama	...	<i>Ilitshe</i> , stone; <i>amatshe</i> , stones. <i>Ilanyabi</i> , flame; <i>amalangabi</i> , flames.
3	Im In I	y	Itim Itin Iti		<i>Imfezi</i> , cobra; <i>itimfezi</i> , cobras. <i>Ingwé</i> , leopard; <i>itingwé</i> , leopards.
4	Isi Ulu	s	Iti Itim Itin Iti	t	<i>Ihuhla</i> , giraffe; <i>itihuhla</i> , giraffes. <i>Isibamu</i> , gun; <i>itibamu</i> , guns.
5	U	lw			<i>Ulupondo</i> , horn; <i>itimpondo</i> , horns. <i>Unwele</i> , hair; <i>itinwele</i> , hairs.
6	Um U	w	Imi	y	<i>Upegana</i> , rhinoceros; <i>itipegana</i> , rhinoceri. <i>Umzansi</i> , sassaby; <i>imizansi</i> , sassaby (plur.)
7	Ubu	b	No	plural.	<i>Unyaka</i> , year; <i>iminyaka</i> , years.
8	Uku	kw	No	plural.	<i>Ubukakati</i> , witchcraft. <i>Ukufa</i> , death.

The accent always falls on the penultimate.

It is by the use of the euphonic letters that the possessive case is formed, by placing them before the possessive pronouns; thus—

Umfati wami, my wife; *abantu bami*, my people; *ihashi lami*, my horse (but *amahashi ami*, my horses, there being no euphonic letter for that class in the plural); *ingwe yabo*, their leopard; *'sibamu sako*, your gun; *'timpondo tata*, their horns—where “their” refers to any noun of the third class, as *itimpalampala*, sable antelopes, &c.

The third person, singular and plural, of the personal pronouns is governed by the classes of nouns, and changes its initial letter according to the prefix of its nominative.

SINGULAR.						PLURAL.			
Person.	Class.	Nominative.	Accusative.	Dative.	Possessive.	Nominative.	Accusative.	Dative.	Possessive.
1st		Ngi	ngi	kimi	ami	Si	si	kiti	etu
2d		U	ku	kuwe	ako	Ni	ni	kini	enu
3d	1	U	mu	kuye	ake	Ba	ba	kubo	abo
3d	2	Li	li	kulo	alo	A	wa	kuwo	awo
3d	3	I	yi	kuyo	ayo	Ti	ti	kuto	ato
3d	4	Si	si	kuso	aso				
3d	5	Lu	lu	kulo	alo				
3d	6	U	wu	kuwo	awo	I	yi	kuyo	ayo
3d	7	Bu	bu	kubo	abo				
3d	8	Ku	ku	kuko	ako				

There are but few proper adjectives in the language, and most of those which do exist are used to express either dimension or colour; as *mhlope*, white; *bomvu*, red; *luhlata*, green or blue; *'nsundu*, dark-coloured or brown, &c. Also, *ningi*, many; *lukuni*, hard; *dala*, old; *mnandi*, nice or pleasant.

When either of these is used as an epithet, a relative pronoun is prefixed to the adjective, which always is placed after the noun.

The relative pronouns are *a*, *e*, *o*—the *first letter* of the prefix of the noun being the guide to the relative pronoun which is to be used. If this vowel is *a*, then *a* is the relative pronoun; if it is *i*, then *e*; and if *u*, the *o* represents the relative, thus—

Ingonyama 'ensundu, a lion which is dark coloured—*i.e.*, a dark lion.

Umuti olukuni, a tree which is hard—*i.e.*, a hard tree.

But in some cases the relative combines with the prefix of the governing noun before an adjective: thus—

Isibamu esikulu, a gun which is large—*i.e.*, a large gun.

Ihashi elimhlope, a horse which is white—*i.e.*, a white horse.

The absence of actual adjectives is in a great measure supplied by the use of (1) nouns in a simple form, and (2) by the use of *na* (with) and a noun.

1. *Ku 'manti*, it is water—*i.e.*, wet.

Ku 'bukali, it is sharpness—*i.e.*, sharp.

2. *U na 'mandhla*, you are with strength—*i.e.*, are strong.

Ni na 'buvila, you (plur.) are with laziness—*i.e.*, are lazy.

Ku na 'buhlungu, it is with pain—*i.e.*, is painful.

It will be noticed that abbreviations are very common, especially in the plural of nouns: thus one always hears *'bantu 'madhloti*, *'tinyamatana*, *'msumbi*, *'mfula*, in place of *abantu*, *amadhloti*, *itinyamatana*, *umsumbi*, *umfula*.

Every native word ends in a vowel, and when followed by another word commencing with a vowel, the latter is not sounded; thus—

Imbabala 'ncane—not *imbabala encane*,—a young bushbuck.

I file 'ngonyama—not *i file ingonyama*,—the lion is dead.

Si nxapile 'sibamu lesi—not *isibamu lesi*,—this gun missed fire.

I have before stated that the differences between the language spoken by the Swazi people and that of the Zulus are very slight indeed. They consist principally of the following:—

1. The slight sibilant sound of the letter *s* after *t* and occasionally after *d*; thus—

SWAZI.	ZULU.	
' <i>Ku tsatsa</i> ,	' <i>Ku tata</i> ,	To take.
' <i>Ku netsa</i> ,	' <i>Ku neta</i> ,	To be wet.
' <i>Ku dsabula</i> ,	' <i>Ku dabula</i> ,	To tear.
' <i>Ku dsilika</i> ,	' <i>Ku dilika</i> ,	To pull down.

But *'ku duma*, to thunder; *'ku dumisa*, to extol or do honour

to; *induna*, a chief, and many other such words, are pronounced similarly in both languages.

2. The frequent use of the letter *t* by the Swazis, in place of the Zulu *z*; thus—

SWAZI.	ZULU.	
<i>Inyamatana,</i>	<i>Imyamazana,</i>	Any wild game.
<i>Itibamu.</i>	<i>Izibamu,</i>	Guns.
<i>Umfati,</i>	<i>Umfazi,</i>	A wife.
<i>Intombatana,</i>	<i>Intombazana,</i>	A young girl.
<i>Itibuko,</i>	<i>Izibuko,</i>	A ford or drift.
<i>'Ku Tula,</i>	<i>'Ku zala,</i>	To give birth to.

But *'mazinyana*, young goats or antelopes; *inkunzi*, a bull, or male of any first-class animal; *kuziba*, to cover up, as a path overgrown with grass, with many others, are alike in both dialects.

3. Less frequently the letter *v* is employed for the Zulu *z*—

SWAZI.	ZULU.	
<i>'Ku 'vwakala</i> (for <i>evwakala</i>).	<i>'Ku 'zwakala</i> (for <i>ezwakala</i>).	To be perceived by either the sense of smell, taste, or hearing.
<i>Ivive,</i>	<i>Izwe,</i>	Land or country.
<i>Umvila,</i>	<i>Umzila,</i>	A track, usually of cattle.

4. The Zulus employ different words to designate the male and female of the bushbuck: the male is called *inkonka*, the female *imbabala*. The Swazis use the word *imbabala* for both sexes. The latter tribe very seldom use the well-known Zulu word *indhlulamiti* (that which surpasses the trees; from *kudhlula*, to pass by or beyond, or surpass, and *imiti*, trees) for the giraffe, it being usually styled *ihuhla* (*hl* has the sound of the Welsh *ll*), a very similar word to the Sesuto *tuthla*.

Other minor differences exist, but they cannot be included within the scope of the present work, any more than can the numerous grammatical idioms in which the language abounds.

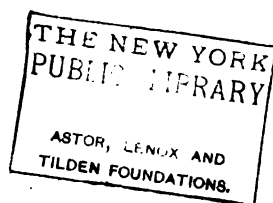
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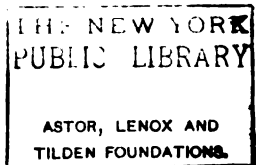
LAMBA AND LIBOMBO

to illustrate

"OF WILD GAME,"

Federick V. Kirby.





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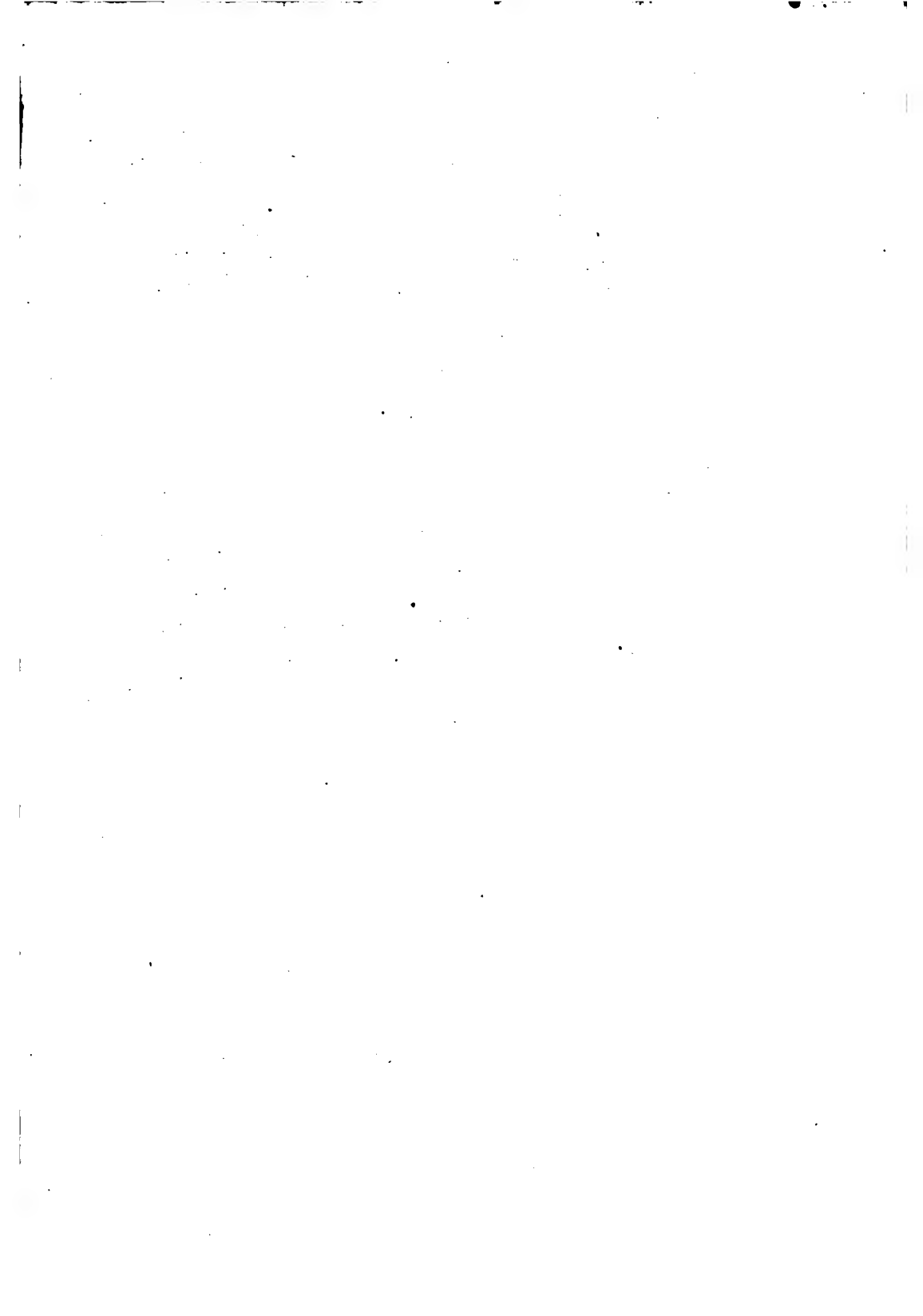
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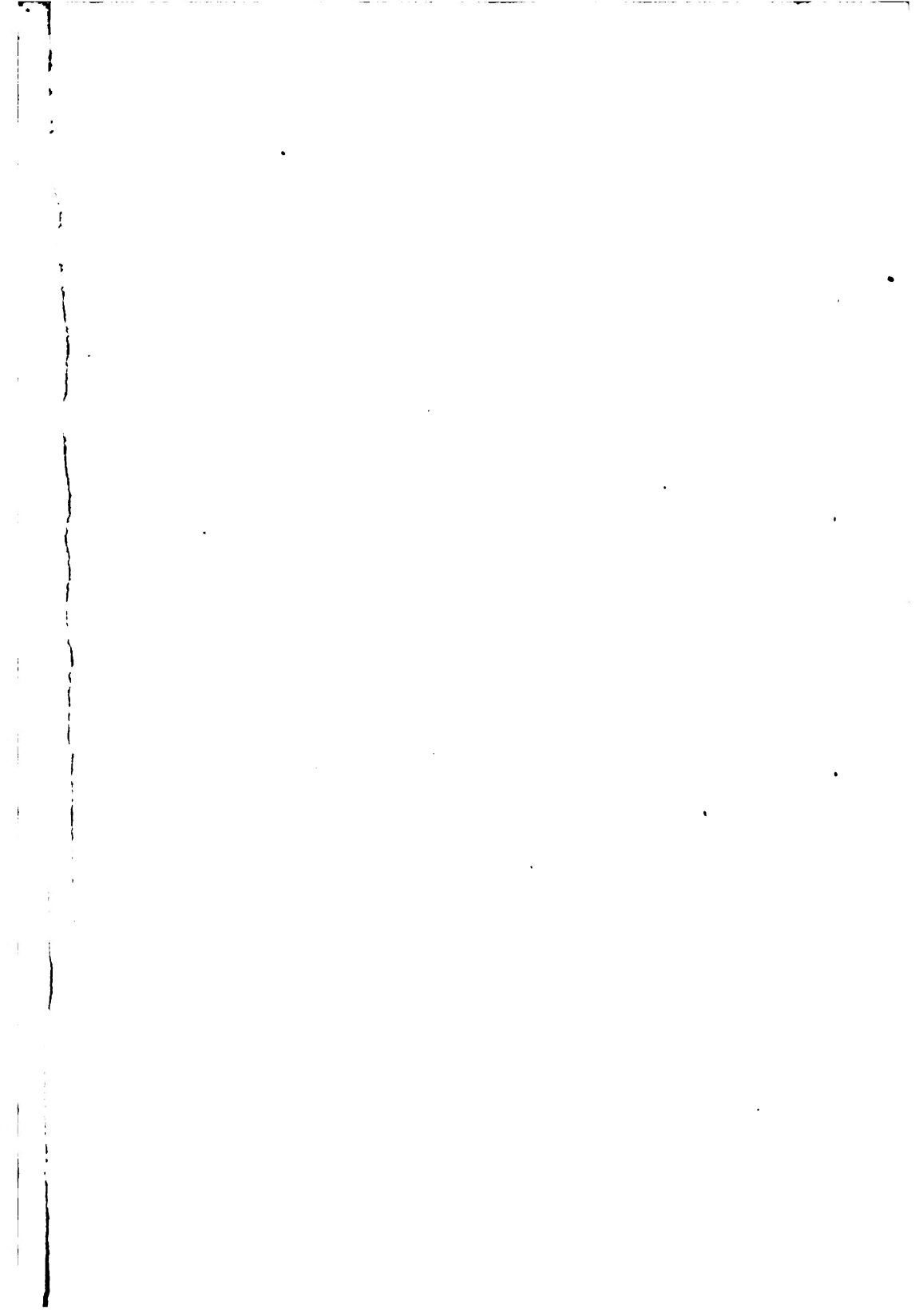
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